CRITIC'S LONDON DIARY


Kingsley Martin
LOW

CRITIC'S LONDON DIARY

FROM THE
NEW STATESMAN
1931–1956

BY
KINGSLEY MARTIN

LONDON
SECKER & WARBURG
1960

Printed in England
in 11 *on* 12 *pt. Monotype Ehrhardt*
by Western Printing Services Ltd, Bristol
and first published 1960
by
Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd
7 John Street, London
*WC*1

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To D.W.
who was often present but never wanted
her name mentioned.

18 SEPTEMBER, 1954

Conversation overheard in this office:

"That sounds all right for Page One. Of course, if the world comes to an end tomorrow, we can always change it."

"Would it be necessary to make a comment in that case?"

"Oh, yes. We should say that though, in principle, we welcomed the event, we couldn't wholly approve of the means employed."

CONTE

PREFAC

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PREFACE

Flibbertigibbet? That was what Beatrice Webb called me in her unpublished Diary, and she was, of course, quite right. My London Diary was sufficiently damning evidence of a promiscuously interested, unconcentrated mind, and if I had known her name for me I should have accepted it as a pseudonym instead of Critic, which I adopted in a hurry when I wrote my first Diary one day in 1931, only to find it sticking to me for ever afterwards like a burr in a dog's tail. Looking back, I see that this diary was my overflow. I was responsible for didactic leading articles and editorial comments, weighed down with matured judgement and serious appraisals of many-sided questions. (I wish questions had, as they say, two sides; I have always found them irregular polygons.) Such features disciplined exuberance and left no space for bubble. I wanted also to speculate about the world; sometimes to go off at half-cock, without pretending I was making an *ex cathedra* pronouncement. I was fascinated by the trivial, human things that the daily press records, but, it seems to me, so often distorts. I liked both cats and birds; I enjoyed most of all dashing to a new country and writing a diary about it. I had causes at heart that were usually not news, but which I thought should be supported; some jokes seemed too good to miss and there were bits of gossip that seemed significant though not stated on the highest authority. In short, as Mrs. Webb saw, I was not exclusively interested in Socialism or even in economics or politics; the time had come to talk of shoes and ships and sealing-wax, as well as cabbages and kings.

So I began a personal diary, linked to the general outlook and personality of the paper which I had just begun to edit. It differed from most current diaries because it was not contributed, but written in the office, much of it at the last minute with an urgent knowledge of the lacunas and imperfections of the paper that was just going to press. It offered a last chance of spilling my mind of what I thought

needed saying that very week and of expressing doubts and hesitations and arguments that lay behind editorial opinion. It was also an escape from solemnity. I could not escape the National Government or Hitler or the blitz or the Welfare State; but I found a great deal of fun mixed up inside and outside this shattering quarter of a century of the world's history.

Once the Diary started, colleagues and correspondents began to suggest ideas and offer contributions—all of which I edited to suit myself. But this Diary was never a composite affair; it expressed only my own views. Which did not prevent me gratefully accepting material, and sometimes paragraphs, from friends like Leonard Woolf who may recognise some passages of his own in the first year when he worked closely with me; from C. H. Rolph, whose expert knowledge in the field of law and crime and punishment has in recent years been woven into this Diary; and, at one time and another, from a long list of colleagues including Raymond Mortimer, V. S. Pritchett, H. N. Brailsford, R. H. S. Crossman, Ritchie Calder, Norman Mackenzie, John Freeman, Janet Adam-Smith, G. W. Stonier, Graham Hutton, J. P. W. Mallalieu, Paul Johnson, C. M. Lloyd and Aylmer Vallance.

A Diary (even allowing for holidays) running from 1,500 to 1,800 words a week amounts in the course of 25 years to something over 1½ million words. I am sure that the publishers are right in thinking that 80,000 of them are enough for a book. Someone had to find a basis of choice and arrangement for this fraction of a vast spate of words. All the diaries from foreign countries, from Mexico to Czechoslovakia and Ireland, had to be left out. My friend Humphrey Hare did the first sorting, and his ingenious arrangement, a compromise between topic and chronology, remains, though I have done a bit of fiddling with it myself since. One advantage of this method is that if sidelights on old politics bore you, you can turn to records of London in the blitz or to reflections on the sexual and criminal trends of our age. Life in an Essex village may hold your attention, if you are weary of the misdeeds of Lord Baldwin or the elder statesmanship of Lord Attlee. So the politics of the Thirties are grouped round the main theme of the struggle against fascism and war; war experience in London, the Labour Government and the cold war, life in Charing Cross and in the country all make chapters of their own. And so, finally, does the individual character of Mr. Park, often believed to be an invention of mine, but

in fact a very real person whose conversation I faithfully recorded. He still labours, I am glad to say, in the same garden where he was finely photographed only the other day by Lucilla Shand. I have not yet found anyone to whom I wish to play Boswell in the house with the view from which I now write.

Rodmell,
Sussex.
September 1959.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

Part One

FASCISM LEADS TO WAR

1931-1941

1931–1932

How It Started MARCH, 1956

ONE day 25 years ago I had been invited to lunch by Arnold Bennett at the Savoy, of which he was a director. He called it the "Grand Babylon Hotel". He was also a director of the *New Statesman*, and the other guests on this occasion were his fellow *New Statesman* directors. I was there to be vetted for my opinions and general presentability as a possible Editor of this journal. It was a difficult occasion for me because I wanted the job very badly, and it was the sort of lunch to distract one's attention from the serious matter in hand. Characteristically Bennett had ordered a lunch to impress. Maybe he was a little nervous—though not as nervous as I! Anyway his stammer seemed to outrun its fame. In between remarks about the food and drink he would drop his jaw suddenly on his shirt-front and confront me with some such question as "What are your . . .", another prodigious jaw drop, ". . . your politics?" The paté was really excellent. Cautiously, between mouthfuls, I said: "I should call myself a Socialist." "I should . . . hope so," he said, apparently astonished that I should express myself cautiously on so obvious a point. So Bennett was a keen Socialist, was he? Then the waiter brought in a huge fish on a magnificent silver platter, and Bennett's Socialism again fell into the background. "That's the fish from the Lake of Geneva," he commented to the waiter. "Really," said Lees-Smith, trying to show appreciation. "Travel is so fast these days. I suppose they could catch it yesterday and bring it over by the night express." For once (air transport was not so common in those days) I was quick on the uptake. "Oh, no," I said, before Bennett could reply, "I expect it was flown over this morning." "Of . . . course," said Bennett, with the most satisfied of jaw drops. And I knew I had got the job.

A National Government was formed in August, 1931

19 SEPTEMBER, 1931

THE fifth column of the right-hand centre page of *The Times* usually affords me some of my most pleasant reading. I look upon it as a

kind of mausoleum of dead ideas. It consists, as everyone knows, of letters about the subject of the day of primary importance. By tradition the only letters printed are by persons of great respectability, who ceased to think many years ago. In ordinary times one turns to them with the smile of affection which one reserves for some rather absurd, faded museum piece or an old sampler stitched by some forgotten spinster, or a stuffed parrot. But since the National Government was formed a new note has crept into the fifth column of the centre page of *The Times*. If you read it today you will see that all these old gentlemen really believed what they wrote and that they are saying now a number of other things about the working classes which their fathers and grandfathers used to say in the good old days, but which they themselves apparently never dared to say in public before Mr. MacDonald formed his third government. Dead ideas carefully mummified in a glass case are charming and amusing, but when taken out and flaunted under our twentieth-century noses as if they were true they tend to be offensive. I give the prize to Guy Liddell, a Lieutenant-Colonel, retired, whose reaction to the national crisis seems to be indignation that parents of the working-class children who live near him in Somerset give them coppers to buy ices from the itinerant ice-cream sellers.

In September there was a naval mutiny at Invergordon

26 SEPTEMBER, 1931

I HAVE been trying to discover what the foreign press has been saying about us during the crisis. The "strike" in the Navy produced some remarkable comments. The *Temps* takes a very serious view. "If England can no longer trust to her naval crews, how can she ever be sure of the morrow or safeguard her power in the world?" True, the men gave three cheers for the King, but they would not haul up the anchor. Reform is apparently to come under pressure of mutiny. "That this should happen in the land where traditions are most respected and where patriotism is firmest, surpasses everything one could imagine." All post-war revolutionary movements have begun in navies—see what the resumption of relations with the U.S.S.R. has done for England!

Admiral Docteur in the *Matin* is still gloomier: "The eyes of all the world are now fixed on Great Britain and her Fleet, but this time we do not look for any salvation for either her or it"! Nor has

Pester Lloyd (Budapest) any comfort for us. "Is it still His Majesty's Navy, that such things should be?" The English pound meant England's economic power, the English Fleet her political power. Now both have gone the same way.

German papers are more cautious. The *Kölnische Zeitung* describes the men shouting "Are we downhearted?" and the thundering "No!" in response, while the *Frankfurter Zeitung* declares that the officers were sympathetic, and asks what will happen to the vaunted British Navy in the next crisis.

I would not like to attempt any answer to this question, but I suspect that there may be something in the suggestion that the officers felt sympathy with the men's position. The Navy is a remarkable institution—so strict in discipline and yet, in some ways, so deeply democratic. Anyway, we have at present a fine picture of the Admirals smoking their pipes side by side with the men's representatives while they discuss "hard cases". I am told—though I cannot vouch for its truth—that one of the difficulties is that the old middle-class habit of investing one's savings in pianos has spread rapidly, since the arrival of the instalment system, in the Navy. The men, according to this report, are horrified at the thought of losing the pianos which have recently been installed in their homes—a feeling which the Admirals (who perhaps buy grand pianos) may fully sympathize with. A sea-story, but perhaps not so tall as some.



26 SEPTEMBER, 1931

THE Russian press, as a whole, has a delightfully simple explanation of the National Government and the Labour Opposition. The whole thing is a sham fight, got up by Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Henderson to comfort the bourgeoisie and fool the workers. The object both of the Labour Party and the "Trade Union Bureaucrats" is to defend capitalism. MacDonald, therefore, was cast for the role of "saving the country", whilst Henderson would delude the masses into the belief that he would save them, by "brandishing a cardboard axe" at his whilom chief. Plain evidence of this was to be seen in the respectful hearing given to Lord Sankey's apologia, in the gentle terms in which the "National traitors" were reproached by the "Labour fakers", and in the refusal of the General Council of the T.U.C. to receive a delegation of unemployed hunger-marchers,

whilst it agreed to sermons being preached to Congress by ministers of religion. But the machinations of the Social-Fascists will be defeated. For we are assured that the British Communists are even now rallying the masses for the establishment of soviets of "workers and farmers"!

A General Election took place in October

10 OCTOBER, 1931

THOSE who are trying to identify the Labour Party with national ruin and the Conservative Party (euphemistically rechristened the National Party) with national salvation seem to me to be playing a game which is most certainly dangerous, if it is not dirty. The Labour Party is the Opposition, and His Majesty's Opposition is an integral part of the Constitution as we know it. When Mr. Garvin writes in the *Observer*: "The policy of the Labour Opposition would make it impossible to save from collapse the whole economic basis of Britain and the foundations of the life of the people", he is, of course, writing sheer nonsense, but it is highly dangerous nonsense. We are not going to be governed by the Conservative Party until the crack of doom—indeed it is only too likely that, if we are governed at all by the Conservative Party, doom will crack pretty shortly and sharply. That being so, the time will come quite soon when the Labour Opposition becomes the Labour Government. To try to spread the idea abroad that the advent to power of one of the two parties in the State must inevitably be accompanied by a financial collapse may be a good method of winning a single election, but those who played this game, when they come, as they must, to losing an election, may find that they have done irretrievable damage not only to our credit but to our Constitution. For they are themselves creating conditions in which it might well be impossible for the Opposition to succeed to power without a financial collapse or a revolution, or both. History is strewn with the wreckage of societies and systems in which the blind and obstinate folly of the power and property holders in thinking that they could safely not observe the rules of their own game and could fool all the people all the time led eventually to their own, and unfortunately many other people's, ruin.



17 OCTOBER, 1931

IN the days when politics were politics elections used to be rather fun. People could enjoy getting angry about Home Rule and the House of Lords. These were intelligible issues and they did not threaten the roots of civilization. But now that politics are economics elections are sheer bewilderment. That is partly the fault of the economists who love to argue about niceties of doctrine like so many theologians, and partly that of our educational system which makes no attempt to teach the really quite simple basic facts about the way in which people get their food and clothing. As it is, we have a muddle-headed electorate. The two young women I heard discussing the situation in a post office the other day were probably fairly typical: "You see," said one of them, "you can't rely on gold any more. The only thing now is to stick to pound notes."



31 OCTOBER, 1931

1919, 1924, 1931—"Hang the Kaiser and Make Germany Pay", the Red Letter, and the Gold Rush—the electoral history of Britain has certainly three times repeated itself in twelve years. The similarities are striking and, I should imagine, disturbing for anyone who desires the continuance of parliamentary government. In each of these three cases a sudden and violent assault upon the party of the Left has been made in the name of patriotism. In each of these three cases practically the whole press has been mobilized on the side of the Right in order to induce the electors to believe that every patriotic Briton must vote against the Liberal or the Socialist, as the case might be. In two of these three elections the forces of the Right went into battle led by the man who previously had been at the head of the forces of the Left. And the result proved that in elections, at any rate, patriotism is enough, for the result has been the destruction first of the Liberal, and now of the Labour Party.



9 JANUARY, 1932

THE current issue of the *Political Quarterly* is an exceptionally interesting number. Its *pièce de résistance* is an outspoken article on

the crisis of last autumn by Lord Passfield, in which the peculiarities of Mr. MacDonald as a leader and a colleague are very faithfully exposed. Long before the fateful days of August, the Prime Minister was out of harmony with the Labour Party. He did not conceal his loathing of its "troublesome sections", and he was "very much aware of the shortcomings of each one of his colleagues . . . as well as perhaps incessantly rather too conscious of his own superiority?" He was open to flattering suggestions from other quarters. And finally, in the supreme hour of difficulty, he quietly dropped his friends and transferred himself to those other quarters. On the Sunday night he left the Cabinet empowered to tender to the King the resignation of himself and all the Ministry. On the Monday morning he returned to inform his astonished colleagues that they were out of office, but he was in—for he had actually "kissed hands" as Prime Minister of a National Government. I suppose that Mr. MacDonald would demur to Lord Passfield's interpretation of the facts. But the facts—these and others that are mentioned in the article—remain the facts, and they are not very nice ones. The whole episode has a certain resemblance to Mr. Lloyd George's *coup* in 1916. It has this important difference, however, that it has not broken the Labour Party to pieces. Lord Passfield indeed regards the Labour Party as "consolidated and purified" by the withdrawal of Mr. MacDonald and his little band. And he thinks—as who does not?—that the "National" Government will, before the expiry of the term of the new Parliament, become Conservative "through and through". Will Mr. MacDonald, I wonder, end up as a Conservative Prime Minister?



19 SEPTEMBER, 1931

WATCHING Mr. Gandhi at his first public appearance in England in the Friends' House, I came to the conclusion that a great deal of his impressiveness was simply due to the fact that he sat still. Very few English people ever sit still. Mr. Gandhi remained throughout quite immobile, both when the chairman, Mr. Laurence Housman, was speaking and when he was speaking himself. He seemed the triumph of life reduced to its simplest terms over the complexities of modern civilization. After his own speech—an unpretentious and interesting expression of his views about "truth and non-violence", his regret

that some Congressmen violated this principle and others actually believed in their ability to gain freedom for India by force—he left the hall walking with his hands in front of him as if in prayer. As we followed him out a friend whispered to me: "How far is he a saint and how far an old fox?" I am inclined to think that the saint predominates, but once saintliness becomes a political asset the two ingredients are hard to disentangle.

13 FEBRUARY, 1932

A FRIEND of mine in New York writes that Wall Street is so quiet that you can hear the passing of a dividend. I should have thought the falling of the shares would have drowned all other sounds.

22 OCTOBER 1932

THE discussion in *The Times* about whether it is more patriotic to save or to spend reminds me of the remarks of a very conscientious Cambridge Don of my acquaintance some little time ago. He was, he said, seriously troubled about unemployment. He felt that everyone ought to do his bit towards alleviating it. He had thought of three things he could do. He was having his rooms redecorated; he was having his bed lengthened by a foot as it was at present uncomfortably short; thirdly, he was having a silver egg-cup made for use at breakfast-time because Cambridge eggs were unusually large. He added, however, that he knew "*this was only tinkering with the problem*".

7 MAY, 1932

THE splitting of the atom in the Cavendish Laboratory has not so far had any of the violent physical or political results anticipated in *Wings over Europe*. There have been a few reverberations in the daily papers and a modest letter from the successful scientists in *Nature*, and that is all. It was, I think, twelve years ago that Lord Rutherford succeeded in disintegrating nitrogen: now, after several years of preliminary work and only ten days occupied by the actual

experiment, an atom of hydrogen has been split. The actual power needed was 120,000 volts, terrific enough, but not nearly so great as Lord Rutherford had expected. For the first time new energy has been deliberately created; the old law of "conservation of energy" passes into the limbo assigned to exploded certainties. Even when I was at Cambridge the scientists in the Cavendish seemed to me the most blessed of mortals. They are a team working to a plan under an inspired leader. That is why they achieve results—this success follows only a few weeks after the discovery of the neutron—which far more expensively equipped laboratories quite fail to achieve. Another reason why they outstrip other experimenters and why they seem to me so happy is that they refuse to consider the philosophic or social repercussions of what they do. It may be that this splitting of the atom will some day seem the most important event of our generation. But Rutherford and his colleagues do not discuss whether it will lead to men killing each other more efficiently.

1933–1934

28 JANUARY, 1933

MR. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN'S letter in *The Times* stating that he had seen a grey (not a pied) wagtail in St. James's Park throws a new light on his interests and character. Perhaps it was meant to do so. England is surely the only country in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the eve of an important speech on war debts, could write such a letter in the press. English politicians used to boast that they were by profession gentlemen and that politics was merely their hobby. Since that picture can no longer be supported they are at pains to let us know that even professional politicians can be gentlemen in their spare time. It is an amiable characteristic. Lord Grey set the example as an ornithologist; Mr. Baldwin as a literary connoisseur; Mr. MacDonald delivers speeches on architecture; and Mr. Winston Churchill is soldier, artist, writer and bricklayer. A "human note" of this kind is just what Mr. Neville Chamberlain needs now that he is in the running for the Premiership. Even in the dark days before the Budget he may say that he has seen a tail wagging somewhere.

Hitler assumed absolute power in Germany in March

1 APRIL, 1933

ANTI-SEMITISM is no new thing in Germany. Massacres and burnings at the stake, desecration of synagogues and violation of cemeteries, robberies and confiscations, compulsory herding in Ghettoes and the wearing of a badge of shame—these were for centuries characteristic of the life of Jews in Germany as they were in other countries of East and Central Europe. The Nazi outbreak is particularly reminiscent of the German Jew-baiting in the seventies, when a pamphlet by Wilhelm Marr anticipated Hitler's declaration that no

Jew could be a German citizen by demanding the "elimination" of all individuals in the State who were not of Germanic origin. But the anti-Semitism of the seventies and eighties slackened in the nineties, though it is true that Jews were still excluded from Government service, University professorships and Army commissions until the war of 1914. Hitler's anti-Semitism is therefore the continuation in a particularly vicious form of an old tradition. The fact that Karl Marx was a Jew (though a baptized one) and some of his followers and some of the capitalist war-profiteers were also Jews, is used as a pretext for denouncing a Jewish plot against society. "In defending myself against the Jews," says Hitler, "I fight for the work of the Lord." His *Mein Kampf*, 1932 edition, contains ravings about

> the black-haired young Jew, waiting with satanic joy on his face for the unsuspecting girl whom he will pollute with his blood and thus steal from her race. . . . As he himself systematically destroys women and girls so he does not shrink from tearing down barriers wholesale for others. It was and is the Jews who bring Negroes to the Rhine, everywhere the same ulterior motive and clear aim—to hurl the white race from its cultural and political heights and climb as ruler into its place.

One Nazi song, much sung in the Universities, runs:

> *Wenn's Judenblut vom Messer spritzt,*
> *Dann geht's nochmal so gut.*

("When Jewish blood spurts from the knife, then it is still better.")

When, as a result of such propaganda, Jews in every station in life are mobbed, beaten and stabbed, it is not much use for Dr. Goebbels to complain of being provoked by a Jewish international attack on Germany. The American and Anglo-Jewish community have shown a good deal of restraint: they have waited for full confirmation before making their protest, and they have with them in every civilized country a great body of opinion which is not inspired by Jewish propaganda and which remains friendly to Germany even while it protests. It is the friends of Germany who feel most nearly the stain upon her national honour.



5 AUGUST, 1933

STILL at an age when Palmerston and Gladstone had ten years of political leadership in front of them, Mr. Lloyd George occupies a very singular and enigmatic position in English politics. A man of many pasts, the most hated of Radicals, the most effective of militarists, the originator of national government after the war and its severest critic in 1931, his speeches today are as sparkling as ever and useful sometimes to one party and sometimes to another. He has outdone the Labour Front Bench in its criticism of the present Government; he has spoken often as a Liberal; now, with some doubts about India, he seems set upon delighting the Die-hards. He believes, he explains, in "all or nowt"; if we are to abandon Free Trade let's go the whole hog in Protection. Whether this really portends, as gossip has it, an alliance with Mr. Churchill and Lord Lloyd, it would be rash to say. He is certainly on good terms both with them and with Lord Beaverbrook. But his instincts are radical and his value as a political ally uncertain. Like the poor but honest parents of the girl who left a good home for a life of sin, the old political parties take what they can get from him, but can they forget the past?

In their old age in the country,
In the cottage where they live,
They drink the champagne that she sends them.
But they never can forgive!

The really odd things about politics today are their joylessness and lack of leadership. Odd, because at last science has made the earth man's and the fullness thereof.



6 JANUARY, 1934

I ESCAPED into the train and somewhere—perhaps in the taxi—I lost my wallet with most of my money. I told the conductor on the train of my misfortune. He said: "Why worry? You will not need money in a year's time! We shall be at war in a year's time. Unfortunately. *I* do not want to fight again. See, I was wounded here,

in the forehead, in the last war. No one wants war except the Germans. But war is almost here." "Surely," I said, "there are other possibilities. War is not at all certain. There is no such thing as inevitable war." "Perhaps not," said the conductor. "It's not certain, not more certain than that the sun will be in the sky once more tomorrow." "But," I asked, "if there is war are you sure people will fight again? May not war mean revolution?" "No," he said, "I saw that, too, in 1917. The men thought they would not fight. But the officers drew their revolvers and it was all over—finished. Men are sheep."



6 JANUARY, 1934

A CHRISTMAS truce, I said, to public affairs and public people, to Sir John Simon, General Göring, Leopold Harris and the problem of disarmament. So I went for a week to Switzerland, where, they said, I should find peace and sunshine in company with the Not-Impossible Ski. *En route* I fell in with a Frenchman, a close student of international affairs. He began at once: "Are you British really deceived by Hitler's peace talk as Brüning and the Social Democrats were deceived inside Germany? He says that he is a man of peace: he wants not war, but the fruits of victory. He asks you to talk with him while he arms. When he is ready, he will put a knife in your back or into any part of you that happens to be unprotected." I pointed out that in England we were not concerned that Hitler intended war or that war might come soon, in view of the greatly superior armaments of France and her allies. He replied: "Are we really so superior in force? Ever since the Armistice Germany has been using her foreign loans to build up an unrivalled equipment of factories and a superb air fleet. She has already had nine months of open rearmament—the war baby may surely be expected soon! How many munitions did we produce in nine months during the war and without anything like the equipment with which Nazi Germany begins? Every week munition workers in Germany let us know secretly what arms they are making, how their factories are working day and night . . . in a year's time—I give the spring of 1935 as the outside date—Germany will be ready to attack. And Hitler means war. Has no one in England read *Mein Kampf* and

noticed that he says that 'to forge a well-sharpened sword is the object of a people's domestic policy', and that 'an alliance which is not concluded with a view to war is absurd and worthless'?"



6 JANUARY, 1934

THE season had not begun when I reached the hotel, high up in the mountains. It was hot in the sun and there had been an excellent snowfall. It was wonderfully quiet. The first person I met was a German guest to whom I unguardedly remarked that I had recently made the acquaintance of a great many Germans in London. "Ah," he said, "Jews, I suppose. Why did they leave Germany? They need not have gone. No one would have hurt them." And he went on to explain that all this talk of Jewish persecution was propaganda. ". . . But," he said, breaking off, "one should not talk politics on a holiday. . . ." No, I thought, one should not. And I went out to hire a pair of skis. One should not talk politics, even when told that friends who were beaten daily in concentration camps had nothing to fear, even when I remembered a dozen haunted faces I had seen during the last weeks, and recalled how they had wanted to write, to scrub floors, to do anything in order that they might have a few shillings to send to their wives or parents in Germany. No, one should not talk politics on holiday.



6 JANUARY, 1934

MY next conversation was with a newspaper correspondent in Paris, who told me about the foreign activities of the Nazis, how they had bought French newspapers, how they threatened to raid the houses of those suspected of having anti-Nazi correspondents in Germany, and how they had now established a reign of terror in the Saar. "You may soon learn what their methods are like in England," he said, "they are utterly unscrupulous and they advance everywhere because no one stands up to them. I am not so sure as some of my French friends that the Nazis will attack on the Western front so soon—it will be three years, I think, before they are ready, and it is even conceivable that the intrigues of the Comité des Forges, which enjoys arming both countries and which is playing for a war against

Russia, may come off. The next war may be on the Eastern and not on the Western front. But is that really so much better? They aim —and tell us so—at European hegemony and when they have finished on one front they will turn to the other, just as Bismarck did. They believe that war pays. But there need be no war if Hitler is shown that war will not pay him. Hitler opposed by collective action can be defeated; Hitler accepted at his face value means war."

I asked how it was, if Germany's intentions were so clear, that France was also "talking to Hitler". "Because," he said, "we still hope to avoid war. The French people are very pacific, and if we can persuade England to abide by the Covenant and the Treaties there would not be war. We talk with Hitler now because in the present temper of France we must. But the difference between British and French 'talk' with Hitler is simply that if we once tell the people here in France the truth about German rearmament, and they see the necessity of stopping it, they will act. But in England we do not see the will to act. England is doing just what she did before the last war—trying not to commit herself. And the results must be the same. Are you really going to repeat the mistake of Sir Edward Grey?"

The British Fascist meetings raised problems of public order

23 JUNE, 1934

I WONDER how many people noticed the following dialogue in a police court case arising out of the Olympia meeting?

P.C.: The prisoner used insulting words and behaviour.
Magistrate: What did he say?
P.C.: He said, "Fascism means hunger and war."

Fortunately in this case the prisoner was acquitted, but it has been noticeable that both the injured and the arrested men seem to be almost exclusively anti-Fascists. I notice that one of Sir Oswald Mosley's papers is asking, "Where are the Victims?" Perhaps the shortest answer is in Sir John Gilmour's statement to the House of Commons—a statement which, as reported in the *Daily Mail* for instance, would seem to have been an exoneration of the Fascists. It was in fact nothing of the kind. The police, according to the Home

Secretary's statement, did on one occasion enter "the precincts" of Olympia, but not the hall, and

> found one man who had been fairly severely handled. As they went in they observed other groups of Fascists struggling with and pounding and beating up others. There was a cry of "Police!" and the Fascists in the groups ran into the Olympia.

Sir John went on to report the details of seven cases treated in the West London Hospital, several of them for injuries apparently caused by knuckle-dusters, five treated by St. Mary Abbot's Hospital and two (one of them a woman Fascist with a black shirt and a black eye) by St. George's Hospital. In no case was there any sign of the use of "razors", alleged by Sir Oswald. I shall be surprised if no cases come before the Courts. The law is quite clear that the Chairman is responsible for order at a public meeting on private premises. Who was Chairman at Olympia? Was it Sir Oswald himself? Whoever it was (according to the precedent of a Leeds meeting in 1911 at which Mr. Winston Churchill spoke) is liable for damages in case of undue violence with all those who actually committed the acts of violence.



20 OCTOBER, 1934

WHAT conclusion is the ordinary citizen to draw from the Fascist assault case that was reported in the evening papers of October 10th? A plain-clothes policeman draws up in a car outside the barracks at Chelsea in order to keep an eye on some shops opposite. A Blackshirt, named Pitman, asks him why he has stopped there and socks him one on the jaw before the police officer has "time to say that he is a police officer". Pitman apologizes, explains that he did not recognize the police car, and thought the officer might be one of those malicious people who sometimes throw things into the entrance of Fascist headquarters. Note the upshot. I quote from the evening paper report.

> The magistrate said that the policeman had very fairly admitted that a mistake had been made. Because he thought that a conviction for assault on a police officer might go against Pitman afterwards he would discharge him on payment of forty shillings costs.

Well, well! It seems to follow that in the eyes of Mr. Ronald Powell, the stipendiary magistrate at Westminster, that to strike an ordinary man without provocation in the public street is not really an offence at all. It is incorrect to strike a police officer. But if the police officer admits you struck him in error, you can get off with a mere payment of costs. Knowing that English magistrates are always impartial, I would not suggest that this remarkable decision, which seems at variance with the usual notions of English common law, had anything to do with the fact that Pitman was a Fascist. As we are all equal before the law, I must assume that it is all right for anyone (even a Communist) to strike any un-uniformed person on the jaw if he does not like his looks. If he proves to be a plain-clothes officer, then an apology and costs are also necessary.



15 SEPTEMBER, 1934

I SPENT a pleasant Sunday afternoon in Hyde Park studying the broad backs of London policemen and listening to the remarks of an almost universally anti-Fascist crowd. When I arrived the counter-demonstration was in full swing. There were four entirely orderly mass meetings at which, I think, the general non-political public was scarcely represented at all. How large this counter-demonstration was, I cannot tell, but I should not scout the estimate that it amounted to about ten thousand people. I noticed that *The Times* in an admirably objective report said that the anti-Fascist processions "which came from all parts of London, took nearly an hour to enter the park" and made "an audience of great dimensions". It was odd, after reading this, to see that the *Daily Herald* was so bitterly anxious to discredit the counter-demonstration that it spoke as if it were confined to a "few hundred Communists". Unlike *The Times*, the *Daily Herald* altogether failed to mention that Harry Pollitt and other anti-Fascist speakers urged their supporters to keep to their own meeting and not to go near the Fascists' demonstration. (The *Daily Worker* had re-enforced this policy on the previous day.) Actually, of course, a great many did join with the general Hyde Park crowd when the Fascists arrived. But they were called back to their platforms, and the counter-demonstration marched off together in good order. The Fascist lines marched in while the counter-demonstration was still proceeding. The Blackshirts were carefully

counted and numbered about 2,500. They found waiting for them (several hundred yards away from the counter-demonstration) a large oblong enclosure created by a tight cordon of police. Inside it there were mounted police, four Fascist wagons and platforms for the press. The Blackshirts were received within this *cordon sanitaire*, and that was very nearly all that anyone saw of them for the rest of the afternoon. Over the heads of the police one could see gesticulating blackshirted figures who, one guessed, were trying to make speeches against the noise of the crowd and of the autogyro which hovered overhead. But I do not think that any single person, except a policeman or a Blackshirt, heard a single word that came from a Fascist platform. As for the display, unless one used a looking-glass as a periscope, the only glimpses one got of the Blackshirts were through the legs of policemen. It was rather like trying to get near the cages at the Zoo on a Bank Holiday.

23 JUNE, 1934

I HAVE never met anyone who has actually read a copy of the *Soldier's Voice*, which the Government spokesmen have quoted so extensively in defence of the Sedition Bill. It must be a most potent document, since a few odd copies are enough to provide the excuse for new legislation, designed not only to protect soldiers but also to deprive ordinary people of their civic rights. Further, the arrival of some issues of this publication in a London barracks has enabled the War Office to issue new bylaws for Military Land. Now I have no doubt that these bylaws are intended exclusively for the protection of soldiers. What worries me is that an exactly similar bylaw should have been used at Aldershot for what seems a quite different purpose. I cannot make any comment on the arrest of the four young men for distributing pacifist and anti-Fascist literature at Aldershot, since the case is *sub judice*. But I gather that the police do not allege that these pamphlets were being distributed to the troops. The accused men were standing on military ground when they were giving out propaganda to the civilian crowds at the Tattoo. I feel that if similar bylaws are brought into force in London the Government should at least put up signboards to show when one is treading on sacred ground.

7 JULY, 1934

A FEW weeks ago I commented on the case of four undergraduates who were arrested at Aldershot for distributing literature to the crowds at the Military Tattoo. Since then they have been convicted and bound over by the Aldershot magistrates. In the course of the case one of the accused suggested that the bylaws under which they were charged were *ultra vires*. A legal correspondent who has been into the matter with some care believes this to be the case. The only clause which could possibly warrant such an exercise of authority as the bylaws claim is Section 14 of Military Land Act of 1892. This section gave the Secretary of State for War powers to issue bylaws to regularize the use of War Department land for two purposes and for two purposes only. He is empowered to regulate the use of Military Lands "for the purpose for which they were appropriated", i.e., military training, and he is also given certain powers to prohibit entry on such lands, but only for the purpose of "securing the public from danger" arising from the military use of the land. With remarkable ingenuity the Secretary of State for War has escaped from this niggardly Parliamentary limitation of his powers. The preamble to the 1933 bylaws for Aldershot and District blandly omit any reference to the qualifying clause about "the danger to the public" and quote the Act in such a form that it appears as though absolute and unqualified authority existed to prohibit anyone coming on to the land at all. But even had such powers existed, they still would hardly justify the bylaw under which the pacifists were prosecuted. The bylaw reads as follows:

> No person shall enter or be upon War Department land for the purposes of depositing or distributing or causing to be deposited . . . any handbills or literature or other printed matter of any description.

The offence, it will be noticed, consists not in distributing handbills or leaflets but in having, so to speak, an attitude of mind favourable towards handbill distribution. Here we have again our old friend "an act preparatory to the commission of an offence".

1935–1936

Mussolini's threat to Abyssinia raised the issue of League sanctions

3 AUGUST, 1935

THE meeting was not a big affair—a couple of hundred coloured people, and perhaps fifty white. But I have never seen an Albert Hall meeting which impressed me as so significant an omen as this little gathering in Farringdon Street, called to enlist support for the Emperor of Abyssinia. Mussolini has appealed to the war spirit and declared a White crusade against Black barbarism. Naturally, the response is Black defiance of White barbarism. The speakers came from the West Indies, the Gold Coast, Kenya, Somaliland and Abyssinia itself. When they expressed a hope that the League of Nations or the British Government would see justice done, the audience was silent or ironical. When they declared that coloured people everywhere would fight and die free men rather than submit to the subjugation of the last independent native kingdom, the meeting yelled with enthusiasm. For Blacks to pour contempt on White civilization is easy: Europe is not a good advertisement for civilization, and civilized peoples have seldom behaved in a civilized way to the uncivilized. You had only to say the word "civilization" to set this meeting jeering. Soon it was persuading itself that Abyssinia was the centre of true civilization, and Europe of barbarism. Unconscious of irony, these coloured speakers, who have often surprising eloquence and use the language of Shakespeare and Milton better than most English speakers, were quoting Biblical passages about Ethiopia stretching forth her hand and reading Wordsworth's sonnet to the black hero of Haiti. All the literature of freedom—the product of white civilization—is available for the discomfiture of white tyrants the world over. Africa was described as "the home of the free". We were reminded that "the British Empire is a coloured Empire". (A good and proper point this.) Most significant of all, the world war they prophesied was not between black and white, but between coloured and white; Japan, the most powerful coloured race, was called upon to champion the cause of international justice!

10 AUGUST, 1935

I SEE that Haarlem is now all agog to be at Mussolini, and events at Geneva and the further dispatch of Italian troops are bound to increase the ominous wrath among black people everywhere that I noted last week at the meeting of the Friends of Abyssinia. They have an overwhelming case, and I have received a letter from a highly respectable English gentleman, asking whether it is not time for English people to bring pressure on the British Government to stop this imperialistic bullying by forming a white contingent to fight or at least to do ambulance work in Abyssinia. The situation is indeed nicely calculated to rouse that old-fashioned liberty-loving spirit which John Bull has shown on occasion when other peoples' subjects are bullied and to couple it with the deep racial passion of the Negro. Among many recent press remarks calculated to make the libertarian side see red I choose for quotation M. Henry de Monfried's suggestion in the current *Nineteenth Century* that it is our duty to help Italy to achieve its "humanitarian aim which would bring us all a share of the profits".

21 SEPTEMBER, 1935

SIR SAMUEL HOARE spoke as if he meant what he said. The Assembly had got used to Sir John Simon treating the Covenant as a barrister treats a contract out of whose obligations his client is trying to crawl. The contrast made Sir Samuel's speech doubly effective. When he had finished a Frenchman said "Magnificent! If only a British Foreign Secretary had made that speech ten years ago!" A Chinese, thinking of a different crisis, said "Splendid, how different things would be if that speech had been made four years ago." An Englishman said "Just right, only if England had said that six months ago there would have been no war in Abysinnia!" A journalistic wit remarked that to the Italians the speech must come like "*une bombe glacée*". This fitted so well that it was generally believed by the evening that this *mot* was Baron Aloisi's own comment.



THERE are numberless stories of Hitler's adventures on reaching Heaven. The latest addition to my collection also seems to me the best. Hitler approached the Throne and said "Heil Hitler." The Being on the Throne replied "Grüss Gott."

5 OCTOBER, 1935

TUESDAY'S discussion at the Labour Conference at Brighton was great drama. It was a battle of ideas, expressed with deep sincerity, with very little personal animosity. All day long the speeches were maintained at an astonishingly high level. Everyone was conscious of the approach of great events. Many of the speakers had been in the minority in the last war; almost every speech was an expression of an ultimate philosophy and an attempt to apply it to a complex and menacing situation. The drama reached its emotional climax with Mr. Lansbury's passionate declaration of faith, and at that point the inexperienced might have hoped that the curtain would fall. But a good drama ends with a surprise, and the Executive had no intention of leaving Mr. Lansbury with the last word for the day. (It was this phase of events that inspired Low, who was with me, to produce his ironic comment.) Amid a singularly apposite hailstorm which beat a tattoo on the Dome above us, Mr. Ernest Bevin, the one man powerful enough and brutal enough to spoil the effect Mr. Lansbury had produced, let loose a torrent of eloquence in which he accused the Party leader of disloyalty, referred to the political side of the movement as "friends who had come and joined" the Trade Union Party, shouted that this was a crisis in which unity was essential and Mr. Lansbury out of place, and, in effect, told the Conference that most of the speeches were mere intellectualizing in a moment of crisis. He was the man with the big battalions. His speech was the forcible utterance of a responsible and practical man.

Attlee, in what I myself thought to be the most valuable and clear-headed speech in the entire debate, was handicapped, as he always is, by a certain lack of force and dominance. In the course of his

Mussolini's heart touched by
Old George's peroration



Mussolini revolted by coarse brutality
of Bevin.



terrific utterance, Mr. Ernest Bevin, whose bulky figure and aggressive manner have long made him the most conspicuous figure at Labour conferences, made everyone laugh by asking "Who am *I* to protrude my personality in the Labour movement?" It is a thousand pities that Attlee has not a little of Bevin's capacity for not protruding his personality!

One more point about Mr. Lansbury. Because his mind is not trained and logical, many people who know that he is, as someone said, a political saint, imagine that he is a simple soul with no brains. In his Autobiography Lord Snowden quotes Augustine Birrell as saying that "the trouble with Lansbury is that he will let his bleeding heart run away with his bloody head". And there are times when one sympathizes with this diagnosis. But anyone who knows or who works with Mr. Lansbury soon becomes aware that he is immensely shrewd in practical affairs and a most astute political fighter. One of the most experienced Conservative politicians remarked the other day that he was the shrewdest Leader of the Opposition that the House of Commons had seen since the war.

The proposed Laval-Hoare pact led to Sir Samuel's resignation

28 DECEMBER, 1935

REVELATIONS about last week's events will sell the Diaries and Memoirs of politicians for a generation to come. But the main outlines are already tolerably clear. Terms which the leading members of the Cabinet were familiar with had long been under discussion. Sir Samuel went to see M. Laval (Lord Halifax says *not* to settle terms, though Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel himself both imply that he was pressed to go for that purpose), and was prevailed upon to agree to proposals that went beyond those which at least some members of the Cabinet were willing to offer Mussolini—indeed they are said to have been inspired by Mussolini himself. Sir Samuel and M. Laval no doubt hoped they would arrive at Geneva after the Duce had agreed to make them a basis of discussion, when it would have been difficult for the League to turn them down. As Major Attlee put it: "I heard it suggested that the leakage caused all the trouble; that if those terms had been put out nicely dressed up, with a few words about devotion to the League and to collective security it would have been all right; that it was the absence of the kiss that made the betrayal, and not the betrayal itself." Sir Samuel

therefore begged the assembled British correspondents in Paris not to divulge the terms if they heard what they were, and M. Laval made the same request to the French journalists. (We were apparently wrong in thinking that M. Laval himself arranged the leakage.) Some of the British journalists who already had the terms in their pockets (private information is easy to get in Paris) actually sent them to their newspapers in this country with Sir Samuel's request attached. No British paper published them. But "Pertinax" and the diplomatic correspondent of *L'Œuvre* both gave them in full. Owing to what he euphemistically calls "lack of liaison", Mr. Baldwin did not know the details of the terms until Monday morning, though he seems to have received them on Sunday. The Cabinet had to stand by Sir Samuel or the League, and the old school tie won. But the revolt in the Tory ranks forced them to give way and Sir Samuel resigned.



11 JANUARY, 1936

"WHO is this M. Laval, and why does he always seem about to fall and yet always remains?" I heard this question put by an Englishman and answered by experienced Frenchmen the other day. Summarized, the answer came to something like this: At the beginning of the war, Laval was regarded as a dangerous revolutionary. He was on a list of people whom the Sûreté thought it might be wise to put into prison. But they decided to let him alone and he took an active part in such Labour and Peace movements and conferences as were permitted during the war. If he is no longer a Socialist, we need not make too much of a change of views which is, after all, even more common in the land of Clemenceau and Millerand than in the land of Ramsay MacDonald and J. H. Thomas. It may even be that he is still a genuine pacifist, and that he was sincere when he told his friends early in the Abyssinian dispute that whatever happened he was determined that his name should never appear at the foot of a mobilization order. Not everything about his career is known to the public. Twelve years ago he was a poor man, today he is rich. The sources of his wealth are a subject of speculation. He is a barrister by training, but has not made his money at the Bar. He first became known as a "lobby man", as one of those ingenious politicians who work behind the scenes and who gradually build up

a reputation for "arranging things". He showed this capacity when he became Minister of Labour some seven years ago. He is not a man who reads anything or troubles about principles. He relies on personal ingenuity, not on knowledge or any clear objective—unless it be that Laval shall succeed. He gained great prestige by getting the Saar problem quietly settled—many people had been induced to think that it might lead to war. He followed this success up by the Stresa Front, which brought him immense popularity because it won for France the friendship of Italy, settled apparently for good the old dispute about Tunis and enabled France to remove her troops from the Italian frontier.

11 JANUARY, 1936

SOME years ago I spent a fortnight on a battleship. As an organization, as a triumph of skill, discipline and precision, it impressed me beyond anything I had ever seen in my life. On shore doubts took shape. The thing had cost six or seven million pounds and it was meant to kill people. Assuming that instruments of destruction are necessary, are battleships in modern conditions efficient instruments of destruction? Officers spoke of the dangers of the aerial torpedo and I heard arguments about whether or not a battleship could be destroyed by a squadron of bombers. Then came the Jubilee review. The fleet was the most marvellous thing in the world: and the new anti-aircraft guns guaranteed the security of the Empire and the world. A few months later Mussolini insisted on moving large numbers of troops in a usually British sphere of influence and so we sent this invincible fleet to the Mediterranean. In September the quarrel became a League quarrel. We learnt that the fleet, by some unexplained process, had suddenly been changed into a collection of unserviceable hulks, which could be destroyed in the twinkling of an eye by a devoted band of bombers and by fast motor-boats carrying torpedoes. A battleship is a mighty and magnificent spectacle, but much too expensive to use. It must be protected by small cruisers and destroyers and aeroplanes and torpedo nets and a hundred other devices. It is like the King in chess. It is possible that the Admiralty is right and that we might lose a battleship or two if Mussolini ran amok. But if this is a risk we cannot run, then

why have battleships at all? If, as Lord Salisbury once told the Lords of the Admiralty, "your boats are made of porcelain, we shall have to change our policy". If the Admiralty is right we ought publicly to admit that battleships are only good for show. In that case the most prudent course would surely be to remove them out of reach of Italian explosives. But then the Admiralty must not ask in the budget estimates for tens of millions more money with which to construct further vulnerable mastodons. It sometimes seems that the Admiralty loves big ships merely as women love big pearls—because of the prestige attached to their prodigious costliness.



16 NOVEMBER 1935

MR. OSBERT SITWELL gaily writes to suggest that, since the *Daily Mail* puts "For King and Country" in every issue, the NEW STATESMAN AND NATION ought to have as its slogan "Half a League, Half a League Onward". The joke is not new and it is less apposite at the moment than it was. For as the half-League goes onward it becomes rather more like a whole League. Some time ago, when another Committee was appointed to co-ordinate the efforts of other sub-committees and other committees, Sagittarius wrote to me:

Like leaves in Vallombrosa,
Like virgins in Virginia,
Like monks on Monte Rosa,
Like chiefs in Abyssinia,
Like banditry in China,
Like Turcomen in Khiva,
Like herring in Loch Fyne are
Committees in Geneva.

—which just about expressed my feelings too. I am still as sceptical as anyone about the League and quite alive to the fact that its new activity is due to Great Britain's sudden anxiety about the Empire and about security in general if the League disappears down the drain. But, all the same, I regard the present effort of about fifty nations to do something together to stop a war as a remarkable and ever-exhilarating spectacle, and I'd like to see it succeed.

28 MARCH, 1936

INSIDE the Albert Hall the interruptions were frequent but rather feeble. One man after another stood up and said, "Fascism means war" or something of that kind. In each case he was set upon by a number of Blackshirts and thrown out, sometimes with unnecessary violence. The technique of chucking out has certainly greatly improved since the brutal knuckle-duster tactics which made the Olympia demonstration hideous. Some of the interrupters were, however, seriously hurt, and one man, who is still in St. George's Hospital, was on the danger list for some hours after being thrown out. At the beginning of the meeting, Sir Oswald announced that arrangements had been made between the Fascists and the police to have interrupters handed into custody after they were ejected. But the police seem not, in fact, to have arrested any interrupter, and one policeman who was questioned on the subject laughed at the idea that they should do so. The Fascists seem to have a peculiar grudge against the press. During the lull following one of Sir Oswald's outbursts against the Jews, a Fascist official near the press table (on which, by the way, there were large empty spaces reserved for "the Italian press" and "the German press") was heard to shout in anger, "You reporters take that down, damn you!" An odd incident which has not been generally reported was the attempted display in one of the boxes of a banner draped by four young Catholic woman, needless to say unconnected with any Communist organization, denouncing the treatment of Catholics by the Nazis in Germany.

4 APRIL, 1936

I REFERRED last week to the attempt to create anti-Semitism in this country. A recent and disgusting move is to distribute in this country the notorious *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which everyone knows to be a pack of malicious nonsense suitable only for the use of Julius Streicher. These documents purport to give an account of the statements laid before "the wise men of Zion" by the leader of the secret Jewish world government. Their object is to explain the methods whereby the overthrow of the Gentile nations

might be finally accomplished in order to secure the foundation of the Jewish world state. They were first published in a Russian pamphlet in 1905 and played a prominent part in anti-Semitic literature both before and after the war. They first appeared in England in 1920 and the *Morning Post* and *The Times* published extracts. A year later, however, *The Times* published an article headed "The Truth about the Protocols: a Literary Forgery", in which it was revealed that they had been copied from a lampoon against Napoleon III and that the author himself had been a fierce anti-Semite. Some years later they were published in Switzerland and on May 9th, 1935, a Swiss court declared that the Protocols were forgeries and were of such a nature as to come under the head of obscene literature. The Briton's Publishing Society, however, who have published the Protocols in this country, find odd reasons for accepting their authenticity. "Under Kerensky's successors," says the introduction, "the possession of a copy by anyone in Sovietland was crime sufficient to ensure the owners being shot on sight. The fact is in itself sufficient proof of the genuineness of the Protocols." The introduction also contains an extract from an interview with Mr. Henry Ford, published in the New York *World*. "The only statement I care to make about the Protocols is that they fit in with what is going on." The fact that Mr. Ford repudiated this view a few years later is not, however, mentioned. The translator himself is a little ingenuous. "Who are the Elders?" he asks. "This is the secret which has not been revealed. They are the Hidden Hand."

In August the Franco rebellion began in Spain

8 AUGUST, 1936

I AM told on authority that is usually reliable that the British Government is trying to bring about peace in Spain by the proposal to both sides that they cease fighting and retain those parts of Spain which they now hold. This suggestion, well-intentioned no doubt, but comic in the circumstances, recalls a similar piece of futility in 1919. At the height of the civil war in Russia when Denikin held the south of the Ukraine, when Kolchak was in Siberia and the Mensheviks held the Caucasus, the British proposed to both sides a meeting in Prinkipo at which Russia should be divided up as it then stood. It

may appear strange in the light of subsequent history that it was the Whites who refused and the Reds who accepted the invitation to this conference!



8 AUGUST, 1936

The Times has so far kept its head, but not avoided an intellectual confusion which betrays sympathy with those who it would like not to have to admit are rebels conspiring against a constitutional Government. It is surely an astonishing thing that no protest should come from England when pirates (for that is what General Franco's ships and aeroplanes are) drop bombs and fire guns across the bows of British battleships. I never expected to see so complete a justification of the Marxian thesis that class ultimately overrides all other considerations. It is lamentable that the British Embassy should at this time be over the frontier, out of touch with the Spanish Government, a convenient centre for fugitive hysteria. Distinguished correspondents with the rebel troops fall naturally into accepting their state of mind. I choose a significant sentence from Sir Percival Phillips' dispatch to the *Daily Telegraph* on Thursday of this week:

> Fascist courts-martial are being held in towns where the principal officials openly sided with the Communists. There was one yesterday at Huelva where the civil governor, a lieutenant-colonel of the Civil Guards and a lieutenant-colonel of carabineers, were shot.

Or, in other and more accurate words, officials and army officers were murdered because they remained loyal to the Government whose sworn servants they were. If they had been disloyal and shot by the Government this would have been a Communist atrocity.



15 AUGUST, 1936

FOR centuries Christian blood was shed to keep the Moors out of Europe. Today our pro-Fascist press is so desperately keen on working-up "a war for Christianity" that they are prepared to see the savage black troops of Morocco as the saviours of Christian civilization in Europe. I take this superb bit of confused nonsense from last Sunday's *Observer*:

As El Cid saved Spain from the Moors centuries ago, patriotic Spaniards of today want to save their country from the new barbaric wave which they feel is threatening Europe.

22 AUGUST, 1936

How lucky for the Spanish rebels to have hit upon August for their attack! The Englishman on holiday does not want to be bothered with foreign wars. August is supposed to be the newspaper's "silly season". But war broke out in August 1914, and as I cast my mind back over the years since the war, it is surprising how many spectacular events, from Snowden's stand at The Hague to the formation of the National Government in 1931, have occurred in August. "Everyone", as they say, is out of town, just as they were when war broke out twenty-two years ago. Back in London I urgently want to know what steps our Labour leaders are taking. I see that the Communists demonstrated in Trafalgar Square, that Harry Pollitt is appealing to us all in the *Daily Worker* to remember that it is people like us who are being shot in Spain, that George Lansbury has an appeal in *The Times*, and Sir Walter Citrine has postponed his holiday. But what of the official Labour leaders? Attlee is in Russia, Morrison in Geneva, Alexander in California, and I am told, when I ring up, that Dalton is in Lapland. Arthur Greenwood, left in charge, is reported, like Mr. Baldwin, to be in the country. Surely Labour should be demanding the calling of Parliament, and getting Mr. Baldwin to come out with a statement expressing the solidarity of British, French and Spanish democracy? There is something almost fantastic in the quietism of English Labour at such a moment. The parallel with the German Social Democrats just before Hitler is unpleasantly close. Later I hear to my relief that Greenwood and Citrine are seeing Eden.

22 AUGUST, 1936

IN the public house in the village, no one talks much about the Spanish war. It still seems a long way off. But the gardener who is cutting down waist-high nettles with a scythe says to me: "If there is another war I am not going to be in it, nor is my son." He was shot

through the legs and tells me how he was done out of his pension, and how little point he can see in having fought against the Germans who were then supposed to be committing all the atrocities that Lord Rothermere now attributes to the Spanish population. And then he goes on to a quite simple but accurate picture of events. "As far as I can make of it," he says, "these Fascists have made war, and started a revolution in Spain, and English aeroplane pilots are being allowed to go over and help them. It ought to be stopped. And we ought not to allow any Fascists in this country either."



29 AUGUST, 1936

THE Rothermere press has outdone its own disgusting record. Its stories, unsupported by facts and coming vaguely from Lisbon or from dubious refugees from the terror, have been taken up by the Catholic press and turned into the basis for demands for a Christian crusade in which the Moors are to be the instruments for christianizing Spain. Stories of crucifixions, eyes gouged out and the rest are familiar. They date from the martyrologies which misguided evangelical parents used to give children to read on Sunday afternoons. The *Daily Mail* perhaps reached its climax on August 17th when its special correspondent with the "anti-red forces in Badajoz" gave a long account of the capture of the city by patriots without saying anything of the cold-blooded slaughter of something up to 2,000 defenders of the city. On the next day there were stories of men and women soaked in petrol and burnt alive and a priest with his foot cut off by a hatchet (compare the famous undiscovered child whose hands were cut off during the last war). Saturday's issue collapsed into sheer burlesque. Under headlines "Red Beauty Queen tortures 28 Nuns", the *Mail*'s special correspondent from Lisbon described a woman named "Miss Moron" (from the town of Moron, near Seville). After a completely incredible story of how this "infamous beauty" jeered at nuns who were "subjected to inconceivable tortures by relays of Red maniacs", she was finally, according to the *Daily Mail*, captured and shot.

But her maniacal fury endured to the end. Witnesses stated that as she faced the firing party she shook her clenched fist and

shouted her favourite Marxist slogan: "Children . . . No! Husbands . . . Yes!"

Now I wonder which of the voluminous works of Marx this remarkable slogan comes from?

Critic attended a Brussels Peace Conference organised by the Popular Front

12 SEPTEMBER, 1936

THE Greeks used the word αἰδώς to describe the sense of shame felt at any spectacle of public humiliation. I know of no English word, unless it be "shame-making", to convey the effect on me of the First World Peace Congress at Brussels. It was not that the hastily-improvised organization was inadequate; the organizers had performed wonders in moving the Conference almost at the last minute from Geneva to Brussels, and seeing that a thousand or two unexpected delegates turned up it was not surprising that there should have been an awful scrimmage over the hotel accommodation. The trouble went much deeper than that. People would even have got over the shortage of lavatories if the Congress itself had meant anything. As it was they walked about in increasing gloom; they wore their badges R.U.P., the *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*, with less and less confidence and asked you whether the letters were not a misprint for R.I.P. And ought not the Congress to have been called "the Last" instead of the "First" World Peace Conference? That was why I felt ashamed. People who had saved up a few pounds to come and learn how they could work for peace left, I think, with less hope and less faith than they had when they arrived.

For this Congress came at least ten years too late. Ten years ago a peace congress of common people from all over the world—for the Congress was really world-wide—might have been the beginning of a League of Peoples which could have superseded the League of Nations. As it was, the proceedings only recalled H. W. Nevinson's brilliant phrase about "the stage army of the good". And this was the more pathetic because the delegates included a host of faces not known at Geneva, working-class people who had come often in spite of official discouragement, in spite of the coolness of Transport House and the League of Nations Union to any congress which was to include Left-wing and Communists as well as professional paci-

fists. In some factories working men had clubbed together to send delegates. There they were, the cannon fodder of the next war, waiting for leadership and knowing, as their cheers showed when they had the chance, that the next war had something to do with Fascism and with Spain. But neither Fascism nor Spain could be mentioned. An American organization "against War and Fascism" had to suppress its too provocative title. Twice the rank and file tried to express its feelings. On the first night when a Spanish delegate appeared, a host of fists went up and shouts began "*Les Avions pour l'Espagne*". The demonstrators were at once informed that this was an entirely non-political congress. It was about peace, not about politics, not about the actual war that is now raging, but about the prevention of some war that might happen some time. A strange division, but one maintained throughout the Congress. At the final demonstration the Spaniards again appeared, and "Pasionaria", the eloquent and beautiful woman deputy from Oviedo, who had evoked ardent sympathy for her cause in France, arrived on the platform. Shouts of "*Les Espagnols au Micro*" broke out spontaneously. It was not Lord Cecil, but Marcel Cachin, the veteran French Communist, who checked this demonstration. They must not introduce politics. "Pasionaria" remained silent. Marcel Cachin pronounced an eloquent and unexceptionable speech on liberty, democracy and peace. "Admirable discipline among the Communists," I heard League of Nations Union organizers remark. A promise had been given to the Belgian Government that there should be no political demonstration. Yes, the Communists behaved admirably. They kept their word. But what is the use of promising not to discuss realities? What is the use of a "united front" if the price is worn-out platitudes and the murder of honesty, enthusiasm and faith?

A great storm broke out as I left the Exhibition building, where the Congress was held. The fine words that once revolutionized the world—liberty, equality and brotherhood—and which have been in some form or other the inspiration of all human striving in the Western world for the last two centuries, still resounded in my ears. Peace, Democracy, Progress—yes, they are "myths", no doubt, but myths that can be realized by human will and which men will still cherish and revive, in some new form, when the pagan myths of national hegemony and racial domination have again brought us to destruction. As I realized this in the driving rain waiting for a taxi,

I thought I saw for the moment a mighty gust of wind take these huge buildings and the rolling phrases with them and whirl them up to heaven like so many leaves of paper, like so many banknotes in René Clair's film of the catastrophe of capitalism. There, flying up to the clouds, were the Exhibition statues of Labour, Peace and Industry; there were Lord Cecil, dignified as ever in his Assumption, Mrs. Corbett Ashby, saying something about the sanctity of treaties, Maxwell Garnett asking if we had paid enough attention to Article XIX of the Covenant, and behind them the entire gesticulating Conference and the map of Europe, rolled up in a strange guise, and last of all, old John Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Jefferson and Jeremy Bentham. Returning to earth, I caught the Ostend boat. The wind had not subsided and the only vision left was the huddled deck of sick humanity.



19 SEPTEMBER, 1936

THE action of the Pope in blessing the Spanish rebels raises some interesting points. The opponents of Catholic Emancipation in this country always argued that the Pope claimed the right to release subjects from their civil allegiance. They seem to have been right. Secondly, what do good Catholics make of a Papal blessing for Mohammedan Moors when they slaughter Basque Catholics? Thirdly, included in this blessing are the soldiers who killed militiamen—as *The Times* correspondent described it—on the altar steps of Badajoz Cathedral. Surely we must go back a long way—to the days of the Schism and the less reputable Popes, I think—to find a Vicar of Christ condoning, and even approving, a holy and bloodthirsty war carried out by infidels. I fully sympathize with the horror of Roman Catholics at the burning of churches and images, but those who know anything of the history of Spain might surely have expected from the Pope a call to repentance, because the Church, which has dominated that country for so many centuries, has kept its children in such brutal ignorance and superstition that when a chance of freedom comes to them their instinct is to burn and kill in revenge. The other day a platform speaker in this country was asked about people burning the churches. Well, he said, the Church has burnt enough of them! They are only getting a bit of their own back! A savage reply; but it is a pity when English Catholics forget the historical background of Spanish savagery.

26 SEPTEMBER, 1936

MR. SEYMOUR COCKS, M.P., and his colleagues have just returned from Madrid. They confirm what we already knew and add some new details. The Spanish Government is crying out for help and cannot understand why it is refused by France and England; the rebels have about twelve aeroplanes to every Government machine; Franco is hastening his attack because, with the great majority of the population against him and all the weapons he can possibly need, his best hope is in a spectacular and terrorizing attack. He is now reported to have issued gas-masks to his men and is expected to try gas as a preliminary to storming the next strong positions. (This may not be true; an earlier report that the Government was going to use gas was false, but then the Government has the masses on its side, which may make all the difference.) The evidence of M. Koestler, the competent French journalist who has been interviewing the rebel generals, shows that they have no constructive ideas in their minds. Challenged about what they would do in trying to occupy a wholly hostile area, they said that they would shoot the entire working-class male population. The first-hand evidence produced by journalists and others before the Committee that is inquiring into Portugal's part in the war crosses a number of t's and dots several important i's. We now have the names of the hotels in Lisbon which have been used as the rebel headquarters, and we know who a number of the Nazis are who are working there with the Spanish Fascists. When Mr. Lloyd George and other well-meaning people say that Hitler has only peaceful intentions, I do want to remind them that Nazi aeroplanes are now bombing the Spanish population, Nazi experts advising in the campaign, and that we know in considerable detail from the captured documents how far Nazi propaganda prepared the way for the military rebellion. I quite understand why so many people won't pay attention to these European horrors. They are so ghastly and so close that our instinct is to say that they are not our concern. Meanwhile, Sir Samuel Hoare has been inspecting our defences in the Mediterranean and says that whatever happens as a result of the faction fight now going on in Spain, Britain will still rule the waves in the Mediterranean. We are quite ready to fight a war for Malta or Cyprus.

5 DECEMBER, 1936

THE Albert Hall last week was full for the Spanish Medical Aid. Here one certainly felt the force of Huxley's warning—and also the difficulty of heeding it. The audience was astonishingly young, and those young men and women showed throughout that they completely identified the cause of the Spanish people with their own cause, that they felt that this was their war just as clearly and as passionately as many people once felt that the German invasion of Belgium was England's cause. And, just as people poured out support for violated Belgium in 1914, so this audience were prepared to do anything they could to help Spain. The one practical thing they could do was to contribute towards the cost of looking after the wounded. Out of £2,000 collected, £1,500 was passed up during the meeting—an immense sum in view of the comparative poverty of most of the audience. There were items of jewellery too, and £1 from a "London policeman". Dr. Addison, as chairman of the Spanish Medical Aid, presided. He was quiet and non-political. Sir Stafford Cripps was religious. I use the word in its precise sense. For that is the key to Sir Stafford's sincerity and to his "indiscretions". He spoke much of self-service and behind his words was a clear conviction that Fascism is the Devil. Lord Churchill, who first took the Medical Unit to Spain, gave a direct and human account of its experiences. He, too, was unpolitical. He told a story of a wounded Moor whom the Unit had looked after. This Moor boasted of the fine pay Franco gave his troops, of the farm he would buy after the war, and displayed as evidence of Franco's generosity—what do you think? A German 1,000-mark note of the inflation period. When he heard that it was worthless his rage knew no bounds and I've been told that the Spanish Government was wise enough to release this Moor so that he could let his comrades in Franco's army know the truth. "I liked Churchill best," said a friend of mine who knows Spain well to me after the meeting; "he spoke of Moors as human beings. Much of the meeting frightened me by its warlike feeling. When slogans get going people forget. The Left in Spain has always extolled the Moors in the past as a race cruelly persecuted by the Catholics. Now the Moors are just part of the Fascist devil." This, as Huxley said, always happens in war. It raises the old

intolerable dilemma of having to organize against evil—and Franco's attack is evil if anything ever was—and finding that you cannot do it without yourself engendering hatred. The star turn of the meeting was Harry Pollitt, who got a terrific reception and whose presence was completely ignored in the reports in *The Times* and, most significant, in the *Daily Herald*. The meeting was supposed to end with "God Save the People"—a fine hymn with a good tune, which very few people knew. The meeting actually ended with the "Internationale", sung with overwhelming fervour. Why does the Labour Party, by cold-shouldering movements which really appeal to the enthusiasm of the workers, force the rank and file to look to Communists for leadership?



5 DECEMBER, 1936

OVERHEARD in the street. First bus conductor, looking at the evening paper: "If the Germans have sent troops officially, the Government will deeply deplore it." Second bus conductor: "Gee, Hitler won't get much sleep tonight, will he?"

Stalin's purges reached their climax in 1936–7

29 AUGUST, 1936

A FRIEND who was in Moscow in the summer of 1920, sends me some impressions of the children whom this revolution has now devoured. Those were the heroic days of endurance and struggle, for war still raged on the Polish front and Wrangel still held the Crimea. Lenin was ill and rarely visible, and Trotsky, the incarnation of the militant working-class, was every man's hero. At a meeting of the International (which Indians, Chinese and Frenchmen had reached at great peril across the blockade) the chief speakers were Trotsky, Zinoviev and Radek. "Trotsky", writes my friend, "impressed me as few orators since Jaurès have ever done. He looked the romantic and athletic soldier. He had a singularly pleasant and ringing voice. He talked easily, without clichés, and contrived to make his thrusts of a sure and deadly wit, without spoiling the grave, emotional effect of what he had to say. Zinoviev, on the contrary, struck me as a repulsive personality, feminine without grace, sly and probably cruel.

I was tired after the effort of following Trotsky (for my Russian is limited) and I hardly listened to him. Then came Radek, talking in a harsh Yiddish accent, rough, ungraceful and undignified. But he had inexhaustible vitality and a rollicking sense of humour that delighted the audience. Of Trostky I saw something at his Ministry. It was the only Commissariat that ran to time, and a most un-Russian air of military precision pervaded it. But the Commissar himself was reticent. It was to Radek that one went for the indiscreet truth. Squatting on a rug on the floor he would talk into the small hours of the morning in several languages by turn, quoting now Byron (whom he would declaim with gusto) and now Marx. He was the *gamin*, the *enfant terrible* of the revolution, but under all the Bohemian froth, there boiled an unbending spirit of militancy. I was to meet him again some years later at the head of the academy that trained Chinese propagandists.

"The Revolution in those days (save for the half-legendary figure of Lenin, fighting the consequences of his wound in the depths of the Kremlin) meant largely these three men. Zinoviev dominated Leningrad and ran the International. Kamenev, a genial, compromising figure, was important less for himself, than because he was the shadow and satellite of Lenin and of his brother-in-law, Trotsky. Of Bucharin also I saw a good deal. I thought him the straightest and most upright member of the group. He was the doctrinaire, the master of Marxist theory, and he had a reputation for inflexible orthodoxy. When he did afterwards get into trouble, what he was accused of was 'a deviation to the Right'. If I can trust my sense for character, I find it absolutely incredible that Trotsky, Radek or Bucharin should have stooped to the plots of which they stand accused. For Zinoviev or Kamenev I would not go bail, but I think they lacked the courage to conspire against the omnipotent Stalin."



29 AUGUST, 1936

THE Communist Party is still a long way from knowing anything about British psychology. Individually, intelligent Communists are a good deal worried about this Moscow trial—the more so because it has given so strong a weapon to the opponents of the "popular front". But the *Daily Worker*, which has recently become a much

more serious organ of opinion with a greatly increased sale, heads its leaderette, "Shoot the Reptiles", and never even recalls that the "reptiles" of today were its heroes of yesterday—men who played great parts in the Revolution—and that those who shoot them today may be themselves shot as reptiles at the next turn of the wheel. As a piece of tactics, however, what are we to say of people who are working for a popular front in this country and who yet feature on the front page of their paper (*Daily Worker*, August 24th) the story of Sir Walter Citrine and others sending off the Medical Aid Unit to Spain and in a parallel column a news item from Moscow headed, "Citrine sides with Traitors"? The substance of this column was that an appeal had been sent to the Soviet Government from the Second International and the International Federation of Trade Unions pleading for mercy for Zinoviev and his fellow prisoners and urging that they should have a proper defence. Citrine's crime on this occasion was that he had signed this moderate and reasonable request!



24 OCTOBER, 1936

I HAVE this week talked to several people who live in the East End and have intimate knowledge of recent events. They agree that Mosley's march was deliberate provocation; it was to go through almost wholly Jewish streets where Fascism could win no adherents. "We've gotta get rid of the Yids" was the mildest and most printable of the insults flung. I am told that the average worker is simply shocked, particularly by the number of windows broken (largely by gangs of toughs who follow trouble) and that, so far, neither Fascists nor Communists have any considerable number of firm adherents in the East End, though Mosley is rapidly making converts for Communism and mobilizing some anti-Semitism to his side. Dr. Harry Roberts, who knows the East End as only a popular doctor who has worked there for many years can know it, tells me that most of the victims of the riot who have come to his surgery have been silly youths of from fifteen to eighteen years of age who have been induced to shout with the Fascists. They have no political opinions, but are merely budding Jew-baiters. On the other side, he quotes a woman whom he heard say to her child: "Stop your grizzling or I'll give you to the Blackshirts!"

21 NOVEMBER, 1936

THE most striking characteristic of this country at the moment is a greatly increased political consciousness frustrated by an extreme mental confusion. Everywhere I hear the same story. Labour audiences, especially since Edinburgh, are cold about the Labour Party, but immediately alert and curious about any reference to a Popular Front. To them the conception usually implies a working alliance on a short programme accepted by the Labour Party, the more radical Liberals and the Communists. On the other side many people who usually vote Conservative are fed up with Mr. Baldwin and not at all keen about Mr. Chamberlain; some of them are toying with the idea of a reconstructed National Government which would include the Liberals and the Right wing of the Labour Party. Amongst such people—and they include many business men—the most talked-of leader at the moment is Mr. Winston Churchill, who is still distrusted by regular Party men, but is gaining popularity as an extremely able fellow who knows his own mind and is not taken in by German propaganda. He still talks about collective security and the League, even though Geneva is now an obvious camouflage for an alliance. Putting it that way pleases the rank and file of organizations like the League of Nations Union. Mr. Baldwin's admission that he deceived the country because he would not have been returned to office if he had not, did really appal the House of Commons. Conservative Party organizers now feel it will be difficult to persuade the electorate to believe their propaganda in the future. They are not comforted by being told that Mr. Baldwin won't suffer himself because he will shortly retire from the leadership. Mr. Baldwin's speech certainly dismayed other people, and one experienced Lobby correspondent tells me that he has never known any speech have so devastating an effect. The joke is that the phrase about "appalling frankness" was missed in the news agency's reports, and that none of the newspapers immediately realized the significance of Mr. Baldwin's speech. Some papers simply would not believe that he had really said it and none of them commented the next morning. Perhaps they were so flabbergasted that it took them a day to regain enough wind to say anything at all. Mr. Baldwin has long traded on a reputation for honesty. But people are beginning

to say that, if honesty means only a series of honest confessions about dishonesty in the past, a bit of cleverness might be a welcome change. The most charitable description of Mr. Baldwin is Mr. Churchill's. He referred to Mr. Baldwin the other day as a "pale reflection of everybody's perplexities".

I gather that no new party or organization is to be formed and that Winston Churchill and his colleagues are prepared to speak at meetings in defence of these objects under any auspices and at any place where they are asked. The Albert Hall meeting is to be under the auspices of the League of Nations Union, which obviously makes it easier for Sir Walter Citrine to take the chair. For Sir Walter to appear on the platform of a League of Nations Union meeting, even in company with Mr. Winston Churchill, does not, of course, compromise the Labour Party. But where is all this leading to? The immediate result of this group's activities is to strengthen the anti-German section of the Cabinet, and I think that the rather firmer tone of Mr. Eden's last speech is to be attributed in part to the knowledge this group had helped to spread that not everyone in England has fallen for Herr von Ribbentrop. I can see possible further developments. Sir Stafford Cripps said in the letter he wrote recently to this journal commenting on Dr. Dalton's article that he could not see how the Right wing leaders of the Labour Party could logically refrain from joining the National Government. Of course they could not join the pro-German, semi-Fascist wing of the Government, and I do not suppose they have any immediate intention of combining with anybody—even with themselves. But the logic of present politics is surely the formation of a Centre Front with Winston Churchill as the effective Leader, if not as the potential Prime Minister. Such a Front could include the more progressive Tories, the Liberal Party and some Labour leaders. It would leave the extreme Right Conservative Party on the one hand, and a Socialist Labour Party on the other. I am not suggesting that this will happen, but I regard it as a possibility. It would at least have the merit of clarifying issues.

Edward VIII abdicated in December

12 DECEMBER, 1936

WHEN King George died I remember remarking upon the curiously personal nature of the emotions aroused. People felt that they had lost a member of the family. In London today I notice exactly the same family psychology. Their reactions about the King are just those that one would expect if a close relative had behaved in an improper way that caused everybody trouble. Everyone is unhappy; some are angry, some shake their heads and say "poor boy"; a few are his eager champions. Conservatives are nearly always the fiercest. The King, they feel, has let them down and the Monarchy. I have heard ardent Imperialists make remarks about him this week for which I should certainly have been lynched a fortnight ago. I was amused by one fox-hunting squire who was in the process of divorcing his wife and whose comment was that the King was "no gentleman". Then how astonishing it is to read in a leader in *The Times* that "the question of the marriage . . . was raised by the King himself . . ." and then that this morganatic marriage was a "foolish and deplorable project of misguided ingenuity"!

The poor in London at least are more tolerant. I have asked bus conductors, charwomen and working men and nearly always got the same response. The first thing they say is that, after all, he ought to be able to marry whom he likes. A friend whose work brings her into contact with a large number of working-class people in London every week tells me that they all say much the same thing, that the phrase that sums up their position is, "he is a naughty boy, but we don't want to lose him". They quite like the Duke and Duchess of York, but don't want them as King and Queen. One woman's comment was: "Of course, he had better marry her. It is no use living alongside of someone you don't like. You only want to do them in." On Thursday morning when it was said that the King was to abdicate one heard nothing among poor people but sorrow. The King was as popular with the working class as he has become unpopular with the well-to-do.

This tolerant attitude is, if reports are true, almost confined to London. There is no doubt that one of the most important influences which affected the House of Commons over the week-end was the flood of evidence which reached M.P.s from their constituencies, showing that amongst the rank and file of all parties in the provinces

the feeling against this marriage was overwhelmingly strong. This change in the attitude of the House of Commons has not been sufficiently appreciated. At the beginning Members were stunned. The pretended secret was public property, but the Government said nothing. An experienced lobby correspondent, whose business it is to ascertain the views of Members, estimates that about two-thirds of the House were behind the Government from the outset, while the remaining third was made up in almost equal proportions of the undecided and the very decided, that is to say, of the Members who thought that there was no difficulty about the marriage and those who didn't like it, but were not prepared to risk either abdication or a conflict with the King over it. The minority, scattered over all parts of the House, seemed likely to rally behind Colonel Wedgwood's pro-marriage resolution. This motion appealed to those Members, mostly of the Left, who hated the idea of an ecclesiastical veto on the marriage, and it appealed also to those members, chiefly Conservatives, who were for the King anyway, if necessary with Mrs. Simpson, and who may, some of them, have entertained the idea that this might be a good chance of getting Churchill in and Baldwin out. My lobby friend's view is that for about forty-eight hours there was a real danger of a deadly division of Parliament and the growth of a King's party; this danger reached its height on Friday when Mr. Baldwin somewhat brusquely announced that the Cabinet would have nothing to do with a morganatic marriage. The minority then surged out of the Chamber threatening war, real war, on Baldwin. By Monday all this had changed. Practically the whole House was behind Mr. Baldwin, and when Mr. Churchill again asked his delaying question, he was practically shouted down.

One other factor that has not been talked about in the press and which is, I believe, very important, is the gradual realization that there is more behind the Cabinet's case than Mr. Baldwin had been willing to state. I found a strong feeling in the House of Commons early in the week that, in any case, the King had become surrounded by an undesirable set of people and that if he could not find his happiness without them, it would be better for him to abdicate. Looking at the matter as a personal tragedy rather than as a constitutional issue, there can be no question that the King's position had become, to apply Mrs. Simpson's words, "unhappy and untenable". After the nine days of Hollywood publicity it was difficult to see how he could remain King with dignity or work with his Ministers, and

if it is true, that his personal happiness depends on Mrs. Simpson, it is difficult to believe that his reign could be satisfactory from any point of view. On the other hand, the position of a monarch who has abdicated is most unenviable. It was often said when King Edward was Prince of Wales that he did not wish to become King. But it is one thing not to wish to wear a crown and another thing to give it up.

13 AUGUST, 1955

THE retirement of Bishop Blunt reminds me that I owe him a grudge, though, I admit, the fault was none of his. After nearly twenty years, I see no reason for keeping silent about the incident. Like other newspapermen, I knew that the American papers were full of stories about the King and Mrs. Simpson, and every day wondered whether the story would break, or whether I ought to be the person to break it. I had decided not to, on the ground that the King was entitled to have a private life like any other citizen. Then a message reached me; the King, I was authoritatively told, had irrevocably decided to marry Mrs. Simpson, and would be quite pleased if some serious discussion of the constitutional issue involved could be begun in a responsible paper like *The New Statesman and Nation*. If the story broke in this way, it would forestall scandalous headlines, and open up the proper issues involved in his decision. This removed doubts about publicity, since the choice of a Queen is undoubtedly a matter of public importance. I at once wrote an article arguing that the King had as much right to marry the woman he loved as anyone else, but that if there were really strong reasons against Mrs. Simpson as Queen, that was a problem which could be properly settled by Parliament. In short, I saw no sensible way out of the difficulty except some form of morganatic marriage. Since the information of the King's intention had come to me from the King himself, I thought it right to show him my article. It was passed on to him, and came back to me with a message that he would be glad if I went ahead and published it. I was about to send the article to the printer when I received a further message asking me to postpone publication. Not too happily, I decided to hold up the article for a week. Then came a blow with a blunt instrument, as jesters said at the time, and my article died a natural death. I still have it somewhere in a drawer, another example of love's labour lost.

1937–1938

17 APRIL, 1937

WHY was I going to this dinner? I hate public dinners; and what would one learn of Mr. Baldwin as one of a thousand guests? Why was I going? Subconsciously I suppose because Mr. Baldwin is retiring and it would be "an occasion". Then I found I had two tickets. I owed someone an apology; I had accidentally accepted both as an individual and as *The New Statesman and Nation*. Which place should I occupy? I looked at my companions at the table where I was an individual and hastily decided that the journalists would be much better company. Interesting talk, good food, and excellent wine all at the expense of the F.B.I. Thank you. Lord Hirst's eulogy, and now Mr. Baldwin is speaking. A beautiful voice, that pleasant touch about "growing old gracefully" and that mellow wisdom about the dangers of speed and mechanization. "Fifty years ago one never heard of a nervous breakdown." His real philosophy this, humane, tolerant, the outlook not of Kipling but of a genial country gentleman. He delighted these prosperous manufacturers and business men. One could safely applaud sentiments so remote from the actualities, just as one could go to church on Sunday and feel better for listening to words that can be forgotten on Monday. What is there in common between Mary Webb and the job of making as much money as quickly as possible out of rearmament? This has always been the anomaly and the utility of Mr. Baldwin—to love the beauty of the Worcestershire countryside and the values of a passing age while cheered to the echo as leader of a Party dominated by men whose function it is to sweep away all that he himself would like to stand for.

1 MAY, 1937

CHARACTERISTICALLY the German Embassy in London sends out its invitations in German and in a very difficult Gothic script. Rumour

has it that the Iraqi Legation replied in Iraqi! Some day I hope a full record of Ribbentrop's adventures in this country will be written. He is the most efficient of anti-Nazi propagandists. The following story was actually related by somebody who was present on the occasion. An energetic and outspoken lady, sitting near to Ribbentrop at a dinner party, said, "Your Excellency, I think you are the worst Ambassador Germany has ever sent to England. You have got no sense of humour." Ribbentrop replied, "I assure you, you are quite wrong. I have an excellent sense of humour. Indeed, I am very proud of it. You should see me and the Führer at Berchtesgaden, rolling over and over on the ground together, roaring with laughter when one of us makes a joke."



8 MAY, 1937

THE bombing of Guernica has had a great effect on British opinion. Pro-Franco feeling in the House of Commons scarcely raises its head and support is coming from all sides for the Basques. The National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief at once sent out Leah Manning to Bilbao and Edith Pye went out for the Society of Friends. The Salvation Army is co-operating and people everywhere are offering hospitality to Basque children. I understand that 4,000 are to come to England; they will first be looked after near Southampton and then housed in hostels in various parts of England. The evacuation of the civilian population from Madrid has already been going on for several months. G. T. Garratt, whose name is familiar to readers of this paper, has been largely responsible for this job. Sir George and Lady Young are organizing relief in the Almeria district. What puzzles me is that the Peace Pledge Union takes no official part in a movement which unites Liberals and orthodox Labour with the whole Left and peace movement, and which includes humanitarians of every or no political party. Here, I should have thought, was a great opportunity for a group with a message to show that it can, like the Quakers, serve society by "non-violence". The Society of Friends has a unique and wonderful reputation in every part of the world just because its established custom has for generations been to go at once and do things that are wanted at personal risk and at the risk, too, of misunderstanding.

If it had just stood for non-resistance in time of war, who would have even bothered about it? Its influence in war has come from its work in peace. If the Peace Pledge Union merely stands for disciplined non-violent resistance in war-time it will quickly fizzle out. The question is whether it can do anything before war comes. When the bombs are falling the difference between a man who is standing with his hands folded and one who is gesticulating with a rifle will scarcely be noticeable.



8 MAY, 1937

AWED and blushing painfully (I think I must have been, but fortunately there was no one there to notice) I walked under the awning into Burlington House and found myself among the Great Minds at the Royal Society Conversazione. This, I said to myself, is the mightiest of Institutions; it has revolutionized the world and yet how eminently respectable it remains! I am shaking hands with Professor A., Sir William Blank and Dr. X . . . household names everywhere . . . Great Minds unbending to drink coffee or claret cup, to eat sugar-cake while they discuss magnetic fields, the structure of the crystal, the habits of the spiny anteater. "Don't you think," says a gentle voice at my shoulder, "that everyone here would be better dead?" I am fairly staggered. "Better if the Royal Society had discovered nothing these 250 years?" "Yes," says my friend, "I think if they had stopped at steam, society might have absorbed their discoveries, but electrons, the internal combustion engine, high explosives and aeroplanes . . . no!" "But," I said, "have these great minds no feeling of responsibility for the application of their discoveries? What are their politics?" "Most of them," he said, "are Liberals, mildly to the Left; they believe in progress and all that; but they think changes in society ought to take place slowly, if they are to benefit mankind." Take place slowly! They are not in favour of sudden change, these revolutionaries who turn grass and forests into steam-hammers and silk stockings in a decade; who put a girdle round the earth in a trice, who uproot society, build it towering up to heaven and wipe it out in a night. . . . Not for sudden change these revolutionaries whose achievements make the activities of Napoleon and Lenin look like the marshalling of tea-leaves at the bottom of a cup!

15 MAY, 1937

I KNOW people who so much dislike Mr. Baldwin's style of preaching that they welcome any alternative Prime Minister. The present regime, they say, bulldoses the public and prevents any problem "coming to a head". They like abscesses to come to a head; they like to face realities and prefer the class-conscious capitalist to the mealy-mouth hymn singing . . and so on. My own guess is that in six months' time many of Mr. Baldwin's bitterest critics will be regretting his departure. Some of the younger and more progressive Conservatives have been fed up with Mr. Baldwin; they complain of his laziness, his phlegm, his inertia at home and abroad. But they like him personally. One of them said to me the other day after hearing Mr. Baldwin soliloquize in an expansive mood: "He is mellow like a ripe old vintage port. After all, you can't lead a party for fourteen years and not acquire some wisdom. Compared with Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Chamberlain is crude, harsh stuff and after seeing him fumble over his budget and practically abandon it before his critics—taxation of profits is the one thing Conservative M.P.s really understand—we don't feel very happy about the new regime." Mr. Chamberlain, they complain, is an isolated man, of honest and severe integrity, but with just no faculty for understanding what the other man is thinking; clear-sighted within blinkers, but without that width of outlook and understanding which you need in a Prime Minister. He has not a touch of imagination and said to be incapable of give and take. He cannot even make those small concessions which mean little in substance but which ease relations between political parties. Not because he is particularly reactionary—he isn't —but because he does not understand that a small concession may have a large psychological effect. A strict, upright and unsympathetic character.

22 MAY, 1937

I FIRST heard Philip Snowden speak at the Cambridge Union just after the war. Nothing that has passed since—two Labour Governments, the crisis of 1931, the National Government and all the rest

of it—has effaced or substantially modified that first impression. The motion was something about the Labour Party being a class party. Snowden began his speech with an acid and unanswerable demonstration that political parties always do represent class interests. He clipped his words between his lips as if his mouth was a trap. His lips were the thinnest and tightest of any I ever saw. "Grit" was the word that came into my head when I saw him. Here was a man of courage and tenacity, of great ability, concentrated purpose, manifest integrity and terrific fighting quality. He was capable, I have since learnt, of almost anything good except generosity. He could never be the victim of the aristocratic embrace, could never be cajoled or bought, could never have a great personal following like MacDonald. His adversaries and colleagues would respect and fear him; he was too bitter easily to win affection. No two men could have been more dissimilar than MacDonald and Snowden; they worked together for a lifetime to build the Labour Party without, I believe, ever liking or understanding each other. Snowden, the Yorkshireman, liked everything clean cut; his contempt for MacDonald's rhetoric and Scottish metaphysics appears over and over again in his *Autobiography*. In that bleak and self-centred book, written in his old age, his analysis of MacDonald's leadership in 1924 and his handling of the Zinoviev letter is as merciless as his analysis of his Labour colleagues in 1931. The only member of the 1929–31 Cabinet whose shortcomings he glosses over is himself.



19 JUNE, 1937

THE murderers of Matteotti have now stabbed the brothers Rosselli to death. The methods of Italian tyranny have not changed much since the Borgias employed the dagger and the poisoned cup. Carlo Rosselli was one of the finest of the Italian exiles, a scholar, a brave man of action, in the tradition of Mazzini. His escape from the Lipari Islands in 1929 is one of the most exciting in history—a business of swimming out night after night in search of a promised ship, and being finally pulled on board, when all hope seemed gone, and escaping with bullets flying across the bows. He became the centre of anti-Fascist work in Paris, editing a paper called *Giustizia e*

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Libertà, which was especially annoying to Mussolini because it frequently published the secret official orders to the Italian press, thereby spoiling the effect of much subtle Fascist propaganda. Rosselli was primarily responsible for organizing the Garibaldi battalion in Spain—which, eyewitnesses tell me, has been the most efficient part of the International Brigade—and I have in front of me a number of Rosselli's tiny leaflets with gum on the backs and propaganda in small type on the front. The propaganda is excellently done, and these little labels get distributed in thousands and stuck about all over the place in Italy. Here is one that simply contrasts the promise of peace in the Fascist programme of 1919 with the reality of 1937, when the Grand Council on March 1st announced that everything else in the State must be sacrificed to the intensified military programme. Others deal with the Spanish war, and call upon Italian workers not to fight their Spanish comrades. I was shocked to see *The Times* giving publicity to a Fascist propaganda story that Rosselli had really made terms with Mussolini and was murdered by Communists. The Borgias, as I said at the beginning, used poison as well as the dagger.



17 JULY, 1937

THE following story reaches me from a reliable source. When Mr. Lansbury went to see Hitler a number of important people waited impatiently in the ante-room. One of them complained of the length of time that this Englishman was occupying. A young Nazi on duty said: "No, it is good, he is bringing us the Colonies."



24 JULY, 1937

OF the many people who have died in Spain this week the only one I happened to know was Julian Bell. It is not yet known how he was killed, but he went out as an ambulance driver and was, therefore, a particularly lively mark for one of Franco's bombs. Julian was the son of Clive and Vanessa Bell, a large rollicking person, endowed with a huge gusto for life, full of laughter and good fellowship, but also, as you knew after a few minutes' conversation, extremely serious, sensitive and a scholar. He was a most lovable and

interesting person, delightful to be with because he enjoyed life so much. I don't know which side of Julian would have developed if he had lived. He had written good verse—some of it was published by the Hogarth Press. He edited a book of recollections by conscientious objectors called *We Did Not Fight.* At the same time he had from childhood been intensely interested in military history and was very knowledgeable about questions of strategy. He was an authority on Pope and went out to Wu-Hau University in China as Professor of English literature. But, like so many of the brave spirits of the generation who were not old enough to have seen the last war, Julian knew that he could not stand outside the struggle against Fascism. After two years in China he came back because—it will seem strange to many people—he felt that he must help the anti-Fascist cause in Spain. It seems ironic today to have left China to die in the Spanish war. But Julian would have said that it was really the same war and I think he would have been right.



7 AUGUST, 1937

INTERVENTION under the name of non-intervention has now been going on for a year. Looking back today, is it not a ghastly tragedy that the Spanish Government was not allowed arms at the beginning of the war when it is almost certain that it could have defeated Franco at once and without risk, since neither Italy nor Germany were then deeply or openly committed? As there has been a good deal of discussion about the responsibility for that original decision not to allow the Spanish people arms to defend themselves with, I want to say that I have had final confirmation for the statement that I have made before—that the French proposal for non-intervention was determined by official British pressure. On August 4th, 1936, the French Cabinet met and were strongly in favour of helping the Spanish Government; on August 7th, as a result of inquiries about the British Government's attitude, they reversed their decision.

The second phase of the Japanese war in China involved the bombing of open cities

2 OCTOBER, 1937

"I COULDN'T sleep at night for it," said Mrs. Tomkins, the publican's wife whom I've never known to be interested in politics

before. "I could just hear that little child screaming, and my husband says to me put that paper in the fire and think of something else, but I was kind of fascinated with it and kept looking at it all day long." Mrs. Tomkins was referring to the photograph that appeared in the *News Chronicle* last week of a child torn by a Japanese bomb. "And I think it's right people should know about such things and what's going on." She said: "Of course, I don't know whether there is anything we can do about it, but what can be done should be done." Was she in favour of stopping our trade with Japan and refusing to let her have our oil and raw materials for the war? Certainly she was, and so I found, to my surprise, was a leading magistrate of the district, an old-fashioned Conservative who, like Mrs. Tomkins, had taken no notice when Mussolini tortured the Abyssinians with poison gas, and remained indifferent to the Italian and German invasion of Spain. And Monday's papers showed that the same sentiment had reached the Bishops and other less distinguished correspondents of *The Times*. Why did Guernica, which seemed to me the most horrible, because the most gratuitous and cold-blooded of all crimes, not stir the public mind while the massacres at Nanking and Canton do?

The most important reason, I think, is the absence, for the first time, of counter-propaganda from the Right. No one suggests that the people of Canton have set fire to their own city, no one, oddly enough, talks about the Far Eastern war as a struggle of "rival ideologies" in which we have "no concern". No one even remarks on the irony of protests against war upon civilians from Hitler with the laurels of Guernica still on his brow and Mussolini with his congratulations to his generals and troops in Spain still echoing in Europe. A few people—perhaps an increasing number—realize that we ourselves are building aeroplanes for the same purpose and shall no doubt, if hard pressed, imitate the Japanese and bomb civilians with as much ruthlessness as theirs. But whatever our other reactions, the one clear thing about British opinion just now is that it is solidly on the side of the Chinese. The Right press, which only a few months ago was still publishing a vast acreage of nonsense about our old friends and allies, the Japanese, and which accepted from 1931 to 1933 everything they said about the Chinese as bandits and Communists, have at length realized that the Japanese intend to have China for themselves and do not care whether British ambassadors, ships, buildings, investments or subjects go up in

smoke or not. Hence the removal of that inhibition of property and class interest that has overlaid the normal humanitarianism of Britain in each of the recent wars. One of the Rothermere papers—the most nauseating panderers to Japanese aggression in the past—calls the Japanese "sub-human" (they cannot think except in these hysterical Fascist terms)—and Lord Beaverbrook's *Evening Standard* decides that we should not be interfering in other people's business if we boycotted Japanese goods! The same suggestion two years ago was "lunatic war-mongering . . .". It is only on such occasions when the idealism of the Left coincides with the interest of the Right that Britain ever moves effectively. The last occasion when this coincidence occurred was over the Laval-Hoare terms! Mr. Baldwin, you will recollect, called it a movement of national conscience.

From discussions with people closely in touch with Chinese politics, I gather that Chiang Kai-shek might again have been willing to give way to Japan, even at the price of yielding Northern China, if he had not been forced to resist by the pressure of opinion. All his generals, I am told, insisted that they could not hold their armies and would not themselves remain bound to Chiang unless he reversed the recent policy of Nanking and stood up to Japan. Chiang agreed, but some people still doubt whether he might not yet conspire with the richer Chinese bourgeoisie to buy a further period of peace at the price of Chinese independence—if he got a chance, which now looks very unlikely. As it is, Chiang has been forced to accept the "united front" and to appoint Chu Teh, one of the most experienced Red generals, to the command of the 8th Route Army, as the Chinese Soviet Army is now called. Some interesting details about this army reached me the other day from a correspondent, who only a month or so before the Japanese attack had long conversations with Chu Teh and Mao Tze-tung, his Communist co-leader. Chu Teh estimated the Communist Army at from 80,000 to 90,000 men apart from groups of "partisans". These partisans number many thousands and amount in some districts to considerable bodies of troops, some of them regularly in communication, Chu Teh said, with his army. Mao Tze-tung, discussing the political situation shortly before the war began, emphasized the change in Kuomintang policy at its second plenary session in July, 1936, where Chiang was told that he could not proceed further in the direction of concessions to Japan if this meant any further violation of Chinese

sovereignty. Since then China has become increasingly conscious of Japan as the immediate enemy against which it must struggle even though for the time being this may mean alliance with other imperialist Powers. The "reactionary" nations, he said, are now Japan, Germany and Italy; Britain, until recently the arch-exploiter, is now being merely "conservative" rather than reactionary and must, in Mao Tze-tung's opinion, necessarily be the enemy of Japan, however little she likes being on the same side as Soviet Russia. Events at the moment are bearing out this prophecy, but I met people who said the same thing about Britain and Italy in 1935.

According to *The Times* correspondent at Geneva:

> Another suggestion is that, as a mark of confidence, China should not be called upon to pay her League subscription this year—while, of course, remaining fully in every right of membership.

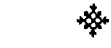
I cannot hope to better this with comment.



30 OCTOBER, 1937

WHEN Signor Gayda says that 147,000 foreigners are now fighting on the Government side in Spain, one assumes that this is an example of the new political technique which no longer relies on that economy of truth which was always incidental to diplomacy, but which follows Hitler's maxim that you must tell whopping big lies if you want to deceive the bourgeoisie, since it is quite accustomed to tell small ones itself. In this case, however, it is just possible that somebody, a typist or telephone operator, may have added an extra zero to the figure, for 14,700 would not, in fact, be far wide of the mark. There is no difficulty in knowing how many troops there are on the Government side. They are proud of having gone there, proud of having saved Madrid last November and of having lost so large a proportion of their numbers. The figures are, I believe, as follows. Between September 1936, when the Brigade first came into being, and July 1st, 1937, about 23,000 foreigners entered Spain to join its ranks. No one thinks there have been any additions since then. Of these, 4,000 have been killed in fighting, or are missing, 4,800 have been repatriated, and there have been 12,000 to 15,000 casualties by wounds or illness at the front. Each contingent, as it was organized,

received a short period of training and went up to the front, where it usually suffered heavy casualties. Thus the international force has never at any one time exceeded 15,000, of which no more than 9,000 were ever at the front at the same time. But to obtain reliable figures accurately in this way would scarcely suit the intention of some members of the Non-Intervention Committee, who have two quite different purposes in view. The first is delay in Spain, and the second is to isolate Soviet Russia diplomatically. The actual struggle in the Committee is between Maisky, who is trying to keep France and England on the same side as Russia, and Grandi, who makes verbal concessions in order to manœuvre Eden and Corbin on to the side of the Fascist bloc. This public duel gave a certain piquancy to the situation in the diplomatic gallery at the opening of Parliament on Tuesday, when Grandi took his seat next to Maisky. The two were observed to be enjoying what was apparently an animated and very good-humoured conversation.



13 NOVEMBER, 1937

I HAVE been to a lot of trouble at one time or another to ask people who have known Ramsay MacDonald intimately to explain the peculiar pathos and tragedy of his career. I do not refer to his change of sides in 1931; there may be good reasons for changing one's political party and in any case that was only the climax of a long evolution. I mean how it came about that the keen young man of the people, with the fine Highland carriage, the noble voice, and the generous ideals, whose popularity at one time could only be compared to Gladstone's—how this first promising and then successful leader became such a pathetic figure towards the end of his life. The result of these inquiries has been a mass of interesting material about MacDonald as a political leader, a colleague and a friend. Some of this had better wait until another time, but there is one central point that one may make, I hope, without offence or unkindness. On cultural subjects MacDonald could listen and learn; he was genuinely interested in literature and the arts and he became a cultured, well-read and charming person. But where public affairs were concerned he was so—so vain, was it?—so afraid of being made to look inferior, perhaps, would be a better way of putting it—that he seemed incapable of listening or learning. He knew foreign

statesmen, but not a great deal about foreign politics; he could talk about Socialism, but his grasp was not very clear. He constantly felt bound to express opinions and use fine phrases about matters which he had given himself no chance of understanding. The result, as a colleague who was never his enemy said to me, was that he ceased in the course of forty years of public life to have anything in his head except fine phrases and moral gestures. "Take this as an example," said my informant. "If a problem which politicians knew nothing about, like the gold standard, arose when Mr. Lloyd George was Prime Minister, he would send for Mr. Keynes or someone like that, question him about it as an expert, and after a couple of hours would have a sufficiently good working understanding of the subject at least to talk about it sensibly and argue about it like a barrister. But if Mr. MacDonald had met Mr. Keynes during the currency crisis of 1931, he would have used the opportunity for telling Mr. Keynes all about the gold standard and what ought to be done about it." Thus he lived too long on the large store of capital which nature had endowed him with, or which he had acquired as a young man. He did not add to it, and when it was exhausted there was nothing left but emptiness and the hollow echo of great words which had once moved multitudes.



13 NOVEMBER, 1937

ONE of the most experienced of Fleet Street journalists remarked last week that in this century no man outside royalty had been given such an ovation on his departure as Canon Sheppard. Certainly there was something unique about the grief and the affection of the innumerable people who passed in an endless chain through St. Martin's, who thronged to his funeral, who still go on talking about him as their leader. His influence on men and women who worked closely with him is still more remarkable. I did not work with him and did not agree with him on some very important issues, but I understand the feeling of his colleagues. He remains constantly in one's mind as the very incarnation of a particular kind of life, the completely integrated Christian, who may have innumerable intellectual doubts and difficulties, but who no longer has emotional conflicts, no longer needs to preach or justify his Church or claim anything for himself, because he lives his own creed, is quite sure of his own fundamental beliefs and no longer wants anything for

himself. He was a peculiarly English type of saint, not an ascetic, but genial and practical. The real test, as I say, is that he has left behind him in a way otherwise quite outside my experience a number of disciples, some of them well-known people and the last that one would have spotted as hero-worshippers, who could not be more sure of the immortality of his teaching and personality than if he had indeed appeared to them risen from the dead. I suppose myths will be built up about him. The myths may not be very important or interesting, but very few of us are real enough to have myths made up about us after we die.



He took water and washed his hands.

30 APRIL, 1938

LAST week the *Evening Standard* published one of the greatest of Low's cartoons. It was a drawing of Mussolini, standing sated with the blood of Spain and Abyssinia while Mr. Chamberlain washed his hands in the Mediterranean. The caption was simply, "He took water and washed his hands." I found that some of my friends, especially the younger ones, were rather puzzled about it. They were impressed and the general point got over to them; one of them, knowing nothing of Pilate, sensibly connected the idea of "washing your hands" of guilt with Lady Macbeth. Comparatively few of the generation under thirty seem to recognize even the commonest Biblical allusion. The significance of this break in tradition is not easy to overestimate. What do you make of much of English literature if you do not know the Bible story and if words rich in association and history come to you flat and poor like the newly invented name of a chemical? And how is the writer to approach his readers with any subtlety if he has to explain common phrases with footnotes, as Mr. T. S. Eliot does for the unusual and erudite references in his poetry? All art relies on the existence of a tradition, on a body of knowledge and ideas taken for granted. So the Greek tragedians built on Homer and British writers on the Bible and Shakespeare. I do not know how far this cut in the literary tradition goes; it may only be a temporary result of the post-war reaction. Perhaps a still younger generation is growing up with a sensible literary knowledge of the Bible which will enable them to make sense of Milton and even of Low's cartoons?



4 JUNE, 1938

A NAZI remarked to a Dutchman the other day that Hitler would be in Holland in a few months' time. "Yes," said the Dutchman, "I know. The Kaiser is here already."

Hitler's threat to Czechoslovakia culminated in the Munich Pact

3 SEPTEMBER, 1938

STRANGE that there was been no broadcasting from England in German at all! Why? Because there is an international agreement against broadcasting in foreign languages? The agreement has been

broken every day by the Fascist Powers. The reason is that the British Government did not wish to offend Hitler, even though they knew they were preparing war against him. They preferred to wait until they had to go to war, allowing him to believe—and naturally in view of their past behaviour—that we should keep out of the war. If we do go to war, Hitler and the German people will complain of our "treachery" as the Kaiser did in 1914; we had not made our intention clear and Germany had relied on our neutrality. . . . Mussolini had the same grievance and used it to unite the Italian people against us during the Abyssinian dispute. When Simon, and later Halifax, went to see Hitler what happened? Hitler did all the haranguing and our statesmen came away with hardly a word said, with a more crushing realization of the appalling danger of Hitler's neuroticism, but without in any way getting over to him how England felt about his ideas or about the universal dangers of his policy. Result, more delusion on his part that Britain was "decadent", rather pro- than anti-Nazi, and certainly a neutral in the war if he managed it on the East and not the West. I have several times tackled people in high places about this. Always the same story. I remember back in 1934 saying to a very important official that diplomatic methods had to be totally changed in dealing with Germany because the regime was not a normal regime. He replied that he feared it was not altogether normal —"the murder of General von Schleicher had shown that". A revealing remark! The fanaticism against the Jews, the programme of *Mein Kampf*, the insane campaign against all Liberal and Socialist opinion, the concentration camps, the clear drive and intention of the regime—these made little or no impression. But the murder of a respectable general who had been Chancellor and who came from a good Prussian family—this was abnormal. He told me that in the long run Germany was Britain's only serious enemy and that we must prepare for war with the Nazis. I said I supposed in that case the British authorities were doing all in their power to subsidize and help the underground freedom movement in Germany. He looked very shocked, admitted it would be "logical", but that it was not the sort of thing we in England did. I put the question to another influential person some years later. He too was shocked. "Would that not be the same kind of tactics as political assassination?" I thought not, but even so would it not be better than a world war? Then I asked him about other forms of propaganda directed to the German people to counteract Goebbels.

Here he agreed. We ought to get it through to Germans that they were not being surrounded, that we were willing for any reasonable colonial and economic settlement if the methods of Hitler were abolished but that his methods would mean war. It was technically possible to get this over and he would like it to be done, but the Government regarded any such measures, any appeal to the people over the heads of the Fuhrer, as dangerous and unfriendly to Germany and would call anyone who suggested such things a warmonger! Could hidebound gentlemanly class-trained folly go farther?



10 SEPTEMBER, 1938

LAST week I referred to those unofficial diplomatists who have been busy helping Hitler to misunderstand British opinion. Lady Chamberlain's well-advertised tour of Nationalist Spain seems likely to increase the illusion. Of course she has gone there in a private capacity, just as her presence in Italy at the time of the Eden crisis was entirely non-political. But when the widow of a distinguished Foreign Secretary who is also sister-in-law of the Premier is banqueted in Burgos and has tea with Franco, conclusions are naturally drawn on the Continent. Lady Chamberlain may, as is stated, be chiefly interested in the social work which she is doing with Princess Beatrice, the sister of Alfonso, but her praise for living conditions in Nationalist Spain and her acceptance of a bouquet decorated with Franco's colours must be taken as an indication of where upper-class British sympathies lie. Mr. Chamberlain has repeated time after time his "impartiality" in the war. If he really wishes anyone to believe him, he will have to impose non-intervention upon his relatives. After all they should be easier to control than Hitler or Mussolini.



17 SEPTEMBER, 1938

IN the days of tension just before Hitler's speech, it was horrifying to hear that the British Ambassador in Berlin had not been personally received by Hitler. If everything he had to say went through Ribbentrop and his friends, who hate England and believe firmly in

British decadence, there was small chance of the British Government's message ever reaching the Führer's ears undistorted. Confirmation of these fears reaches me in a well-informed explanation of Lord Brocket's mysterious dash from Nuremberg, where he was staying as a guest of Hitler, by air to London last week. According to my informant, Lord Brocket was taking tea with Hitler and conversation turned inevitably to the Czech crisis. Hitler remarked conversationally that he hoped and assumed that Great Britain would disinterest herself in the event of a resort to armed intervention in Czechoslovakia. Upon Lord Brocket's replying that in his belief the Führer would be making a very grave mistake if he were to act upon this assumption, Hitler protested that his advisers had assured him that England's non-intervention might be taken for granted. Lord Brocket, firmly but tactfully, said that he understood the British Ambassador's instructions to have been couched in unequivocal terms and to have been delivered in the clearest possible manner. He repeated his own conviction that England could in no circumstances remain neutral in the event of war. The Führer declared that this was the first time such an attitude on the part of Britain had been made clear to him, and left the room disconcerted and obviously annoyed. Rumours of a subsequent explosion of fury and an harangue of those advisers responsible for misleading him are so far unconfirmed, and the story that Field-Marshal Göring was dismissed from Hitler's presence with instructions to make no further appearance at the Nuremberg Conference, and that he retired to a sickbed in consequence, is probably apocryphal. In any case, Lord Brocket was so impressed by his conversation that he left by plane post-haste for London to report to Mr. Chamberlain.



24 SEPTEMBER, 1938

DURING the last few desperate weeks—I suppose with Germany and Italy given a completely free hand in Europe most weeks will now be desperate—the agency reports from the Continent have been wildly inaccurate. Partly, I take it, the demand for news has been so great that it has been supplied even when based on nothing but rumour, partly that the Nazis have perfected the technique of deception. I do not refer to the wicked and deliberate lying in Dr. Goebbels' press about the treatment of the Sudeten Germans and all

the rest of it; nor to the Fascist bribery of a large section of the French press which began both in Paris and in the provinces to say that Czechoslovakia was not worth fighting for and so on. I am thinking of the story that did so much harm to the Czechs at the most critical time when battles were reported on the Sudeten frontier which never took place at all. Again on Tuesday morning of this week the news was published that the Czechs had accepted the Hitler-Chamberlain ultimatum, when in fact they had done nothing of the kind. They were still discussing their answer for many hours afterwards. The most comic incident was the announcement in the evening papers that Earl Baldwin had boarded Mr. Chamberlain's aeroplane at Cologne! When it arrived at Croydon the news had to be hastily suppressed, for Earl Baldwin was not there. I understand that the confusion arose from an agency telegram reporting Lord Baldwin's presence in the neighbourhood not of Chamberlain, but of Chambéry. Two other journalistic feats should be mentioned. On Thursday Lord Beaverbrook's evening paper came out at nine in the morning with a poster "Peace" and a leading article saying that Mr. Chamberlain's flight had made everything splendid for a peaceful world. This edition of the paper found few buyers; one newsvendor explained that people came along, looked at the poster and said "bunkum" or a less polite equivalent and went their way. A few hours later the paper had changed its view so much that the leading article declared that there was now nothing for it but that we should all arm to the teeth and regiment ourselves for war! I leave the best to the last. On Tuesday of this week, the blackest day in our memory, *The Times*, instead of honestly saying that we had given way from fear, said:

> And finally the proposed modifications of the peace treaties, if they *were now carried out through general consent*, would illustrate and strengthen the principle of change achieved without violence, on which almost without exaggeration the whole future development of civilization may be said to depend.



24 SEPTEMBER, 1938

HISTORY will for ever debate whether Mr. Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden saved peace for the moment, or whether on the con-

trary he saved the Nazi regime. On Tuesday and Wednesday the Czechs stood firm and had the situation in the Sudeten areas under control; the French guarantee with the British promise of support seemed too absolute for any withdrawal; at the same time accounts from people returning from Germany corroborated, as I know, by official reports, showed that the population were terrified at the thought of war with Britain, that the Reichswehr (General Beck resigned) were bitterly opposed to a general war, while German fortifications on the Rhine, as Hitler's speech showed, were not complete, and that there was a genuine opposition to war from industrialists and in some cases from workers. In these circumstances one cannot know whether Hitler would have attacked, but my reading of him is that he would not have risked a world war. One cannot even be sure that his regime would have stood a stubborn war in Czechoslovakia with French and Russian aid and an immense campaign appealing to the German people against him. (The chance of doing much by propaganda now is gone; with Hitler on top of the world and another victory by blackmail, all the critical and hostile elements in Germany were silenced.) If that was the situation Mr. Chamberlain's intervention saved not peace, but the Nazi regime, and his action was literally the greatest disaster in modern history. It may have made the difference between a Fascist world and a world moving slowly towards freedom and good government. The fight for freedom in the world is now left to isolated groups, to the heroic defenders of Republican Spain, to the Chinese and it may be to the people of Czechoslovakia. The revulsion in England now is such that Mr. Chamberlain may soon go, and there will be many things we can still do. There is now a real danger of war hysteria arising from outraged pride. Democrats have to pull themselves together and face a new and grim situation.

Rumour takes many forms about the Berchtesgaden interview. Mr. Chamberlain, according to one story, boasts of having three times thumped the table with his fist—if so, I suppose he was explaining to Hitler that he must leave the betrayal of Czechoslovakia to Britain and not march his troops across the frontier. But I believe the interview mainly took the usual form—a tirade and an ultimatum by Hitler so delivered that Mr. Chamberlain was convinced that the Führer was quite beyond any argument. Mr. Chamberlain has never had the ghost of an idea of what dictators are like; his pathetic delusion that Mussolini was his friend must by now be dispelled,

and if he thought he could arrange a "settlement", called a Four Power Pact or what not, with Hitler he must, one would think, have lost that delusion too. He is not used to dealing with fanatics; they do not reside in Edgbaston nor do they take part in negotiations about local government. The first proof of his humiliation was his immediate return to London. A more experienced negotiator would have refused, even if only for the sake of face-saving, to accept an ultimatum when it was first delivered, slept on the situation and tried half a dozen ways of approach before returning with nothing in his hand except a present of an oil painting.

8 OCTOBER, 1938

WHAT exactly happened on the dramatic day that began, it seemed, with war and ended with the Munich invitation? Some strong souls —I know several—never believed in war at any time; they were always convinced that Mr. Chamberlain would fix up something with Hitler and they even regard the arrival of the invitation to Munich during Mr. Chamberlain's speech as a piece of brilliant stage management. Others, like Earl Baldwin, talk of the finger of God intervening to save humanity. Careful inquiry convinces me of the truth that the first theory is more nearly right than the second. Mr. Chamberlain had done everything in his power to persuade Hitler to take the Sudeten areas quietly without forcing the French to support the Czechs. But after Godesberg he was not sure that he would succeed. The White Paper shows that except for a moment at Godesberg he did not resist Hitler's demands; he did, however, ask him to remember that there were limits past which he could not persuade British and French public opinion to go. I feel sure when he made his broadcast speech on the Tuesday night that he genuinely feared that Hitler would prefer war to getting his own way without it. When he began his speech in the House he had grounds for believing that his appeal to Mussolini would work, but he awaited the confirmatory message. Again it is said that the Labour leaders knew that a surrender had been arranged and promised not to make difficulties at the end of Mr. Chamberlain's speech. The facts are different. I understand that they were told at the last minute that some appeal had gone to Mussolini and agreed, since negotiations were still going on, not to insist on a long debate. They intended at

least one speech warning Mr. Chamberlain against a complete surrender. Actually the hysteria of relief in the House was so great that Mr. Attlee only managed to make a remark to which the Tories paid no attention, about not sacrificing "principle" at Munich. Mr. Gallacher tried to protest more vigorously, but he was swept aside, and Mr. Chamberlain went away to complete the policy of Berchtesgaden.

24 SEPTEMBER, 1938

HITLER of course has a small group of friends in this country, as well as in France. They had a meeting at the Caxton Hall on September 16th. They roared like the Nazis at Nuremberg. It was a meeting of the new "British Council against European Commitments", the moving spirit of which is Viscount Lymington. The audience yelled its disapproval of Czechoslovakia, of Soviet Russia, of the Jews—even the name of Disraeli was the signal for a storm of booing, rather to the speaker's embarrassment, for he was quoting Isaac D'Israeli with approval—of the Communists, of "howling deans from the wilds of Kent", and of the whole of the British press. The scorn for the press—there seemed to be no exemptions—was so vocal that the three reporters unconsciously bowed their heads. Lord Lymington, who has lately been in Italy, suggested that for candour the Italian press was infinitely to be preferred to the British. Resounding cheers for Germany, Italy, "the war for God in Spain", and cheers, less resounding, for Chamberlain. The amount of conscientious objection was surprising. The chairman, Mr. Michael Beaumont, M.P. for Aylesbury and a Territorial Army officer, declared that he was not ready to fight for France when "she wantonly involves herself in a dispute in which I contend she and we have no concern". Viscount Lymington referred, quite in the Göring manner, to "sub-men who shout so loud and organize so many ballots". There were the usual sneers at the support of Basque children "by mysterious contributions from God knows where" while British children were destitute and starving. Lord Lymington was outshone by Mr. William Joyce, late henchman of Sir Oswald Mosley, who announced himself a National Socialist, and whose oratory got so furious as to render him positively incoherent. The issue in his opinion was "Chamberlain or a victory for Soviet Russia". The

greater part of the audience were young people of the Fascist type. One clerical collar on the platform gave the desirable Christian touch to the proceedings.



15 OCTOBER, 1938

THERE are still foolish people about who talk of Mr. Chamberlain as if he were a muddle-headed politician with no sense of direction. Do let us get this mistake finally cleared out of the way. Mr. Chamberlain is a tough man who sees very clearly between blinkers. It is his strength that his vision and sympathies are limited. He pursues his chosen path with an astonishing pertinacity, undistracted by popular opinion or emotional complications. It must have taken a lot of courage to dispense with the services of a popular Foreign Minister and, still more, with those of a very able permanent Under-Secretary of State and to carry through to its bitter end a policy which the whole Foreign Office thought as disastrous as it has proved to be. After "promoting" Sir Robert Vansittart to a position of impotence and taking Sir Horace Wilson for his adviser in foreign as in domestic affairs, he set out to purchase British immunity from Fascist wrath by supporting Germany's ambitions in Central Europe and Mussolini's in Spain and Africa. At an age when most men have begun to want comfort, he has taken the whole responsibility of reversing the traditions of British foreign policy on his own shoulders, and the destruction of Austria and Czechoslovakia, though carried out with a thoroughness that he no doubt regrets and with results he did not foresee, are the inevitable, not the accidental, results of his strength and pertinacity.



22 OCTOBER, 1938

DURING the debates on the Munich ultimatum the following remark by a Conservative M.P. was overheard in the lobby: "If that was all he could do, why did he ever go to Munich? He could have written that on the back of a dirty postcard and sent it from Brighton."



24 DECEMBER, 1938

THIS is a true story. The conversation was overheard at a recent public dinner. A distinguished Frenchman was sitting next to Mrs. Chamberlain. He remarked that there had recently been something like a religious revival in France. Mrs. Chamberlain said: "Oh, since Munich, you mean?"

24 FEBRUARY, 1940

THOSE unwise admirers who have compared Mr. Chamberlain to Jesus Christ have made it difficult to do him justice. I believe myself that he can be reasonably defended as a man who did his best to keep his country out of war and was defeated by forces which might have defeated any man, but which he did not even begin to understand. I have been reading a curiously conventional life of the Prime Minister (*Neville Chamberlain: Man of Peace*, by Derek Walker-Smith; Hale, 15s.) which answers some of the fascinating historical and psychological questions posed by his career. A question, for instance, that I often hear discussed is whether after Munich Mr. Chamberlain, in his heart, believed that he had brought peace in our time? I am sure that he hoped so. The crisis was so difficult and the complexities so great and the relief from war so general that Mr. Chamberlain appears to have been swept off the ground and to have believed that he was the instrument of Providence in keeping the peace. One of his colleagues at that time remarked that the Prime Minister displayed an almost mystical view of his function and one hears that Mrs. Chamberlain, who, as Mr. Walker-Smith insists, has greatly influenced her husband, has herself been greatly influenced by the Buchmanites. Ruminating on this, I remembered one of Logan Pearsall Smith's *Trivia* which seemed to bear on this moment in Mr. Chamberlain's career. I turned it up and here it is:

> But oh, those heavenly moments when I feel this trivial universe too small to contain my Attributes; when a sense of the divine Ipseity invades me; when I know that my voice is the voice of Truth, and my umbrella God's umbrella!

This fragment is called *Apotheosis* and it was published in April 1918.

1939–1940

28 JANUARY, 1939

HISTORY will not forgive France and Britain for their part in the destruction of Spanish democracy. Wickedness often goes unpunished, but vacillation and stupidity never. It must be remembered that no help could have been sent to Franco by sea except with the consent of the British and French navies, and that the Spanish army in Catalonia has been defeated, not by Spaniards, but by German and Italian aeroplanes, artillery and tanks; that the blockade of Valencia and Catalonia, like that of the Basque country, has been carried out with the co-operation of the British Government, and most terrible of all that the policy of one-sided intervention has been maintained while a Popular Front Government has been in power in France. That is the most cruel and devastating thought. Pressure from the conservative British Government is no sufficient excuse, nor is the threat, which has really been the decisive factor, that help for the Spanish Government would be opposed, possibly even to the point of civil war, by the French Right. Because the French Left has been intimidated by its enemies, it may soon have to face a choice between a lonely and desperate fight and the fate of the Left in Germany.



11 MARCH, 1939

LORD ALLEN OF HURTWOOD, who died in an Alpine nursing-home, was a remarkable man, whose qualities in another age and another country would have made him a great ecclesiastical statesman. He had a subtle mind, always ingeniously concerned with the complex application of apparently simple moral principles. The latter part of his career has made people forget his earlier achievements. In 1916 his fanatical courage, no less than his gift of organization,

turned the C.O.s' protest against war into a serious political movement. The same qualities enabled him during his term of office to double the membership, the financial resources and the political influence of the I.L.P., which, the present generation is apt to forget, dominated the Labour Party during its earlier period. A physically frail and highly sensitive man, Allen lost one lung during his imprisonment as a C.O. and all his subsequent career would have been different—and perhaps the history of the British Labour Party would have been different—if he had not been kept from active politics after the war by ill health. Not that he could ever keep away from politics, nor for long together think of anything else. He became a power behind the scenes. When he did come out to battle, he had a gift of hardness that made him a formidable opponent. I have watched him exposing shady tactics and dishonest practices with a combination of moral fury and detective skill. His skilful dialectics and often Machiavellian argument, combined with a fervent moral appeal, sometimes exasperated those who did not mind direct opposition. He could back a friend with unwavering loyalty through times of difficulty, and his critical decision in 1931 was due, I know, to a personal appeal from MacDonald. I well remember a conversation with him at that time. He had a flattering letter asking for advice and help from MacDonald, who had treated him with little respect in the preceding years. I left Allen, wondering how far his decision was due to personal loyalty and how far he saw in MacDonald's letter an opportunity of power. He expressed both sentiments to me; I think he had also a doubt, which proved only too well founded, about the possibilities of retaining any influence over MacDonald once he was head of the Tory Government. I think he would have admitted at the end of his life that he had been exploited and discarded after the election of 1931. He was then left in the pathetic position of having quarrelled with his real friends and having to make terribly unconvincing efforts to show that his political philosophy was consistent and unchanged. He was the only idealistic Socialist of my acquaintance with a genuine talent for finance. He used it for the benefit of the I.L.P. He was always fascinated by the play of the money market and he had an absorbing interest in the theory of money. He also had an enlightened love for the arts. But the core of the man was always his ethical outlook. Draped, so to speak, in a Genevan gown, he turned every platform, even the correspondence columns of *The Times*, into a pulpit. His sermons were

always powerful and often aggravating. Listening to his later condemnation of Marxism, I used to recall the brief period when Allen himself professed this creed. In the last conversation I had with him nearly a year ago, he announced his determination to start and himself lead an anti-conscription campaign if the National Government introduced compulsion. As subtle as he was stubborn and as concentrated in action as he was versatile in thought, Allen would have been one of the most potent influences in recent British politics had he not lost a lung on the battlefield of peace.

22 APRIL, 1939

OVERHEARD: "Well, I'm now on the reserved list of occupations and my home is officially in a neutral area. It will be practically a foul if Hitler does anything to me!"

20 MAY, 1939

I CAN never make up my mind whether there is more in Mr. Eden than meets the eye, or whether he is the immaculate insipid Tory which he seems to be. His collected speeches (*Foreign Affairs*, Faber and Faber, 12s. 6d.) have just been published and they match to perfection the elegant, but slightly empty, dust-cover of white and pale blue. In a foreword Mr. Eden writes: "There has grown up of late a strange legend that the efforts of this country to improve relations with the Powers of the Berlin-Rome axis are of recent growth. . . . The pages of this book will show there is no truth in this legend." At first it seems surprising that Mr. Eden should wish to show himself as the protagonist of appeasement, because we tend to forget what tremendous efforts he and this country made to mollify the dictators. It is queer now to recall that, when Hitler tore up the treaty of Locarno, Mr. Eden felt it necessary to apologize to Parliament for not simply accepting this action as rational and sensible. But in the spring of 1936 not only Mr. Chamberlain, but the *News Chronicle* and the Labour Movement were still more hostile to France than to Germany, and, in spite of his League laurels—by then somewhat faded—Mr. Eden was a little suspect as a Francophile. But on the whole he has been far more consistent than most

people; for he is one of the few Englishmen who genuinely had no preference either for Fascism or Communism and stood entirely aloof from the war of ideologies. What he meant by "League action" was collaboration with anyone to rebuild peace. Unfortunately support of the League, combined with this chilly impartiality, led not to collective security but to British isolation. Mr. Eden was neither prepared (as Chamberlain was) to collaborate with the dictators on their own terms, nor to admit that the Fascist International existed and could only be met by a Peace Alliance. So, too, with non-intervention. He really believed in it and really disdained both sides in Spain. My strongest impression, after reading his speeches, is of his insular superiority and pathetic delusion that diplomacy can completely disregard the domestic policies of nations. Mr. Eden still lives in a world of nation-states ruled by an international aristocracy. That is why he only succeeded in rebuffing democrats and embittering dictators.



27 MAY, 1939

OF much that I wrote about refugees I recall Toller's death because it symbolized so much and so many deaths that were to follow.

Ernst Toller was one of the rare people to whom one inevitably attributes the quality of genius. He had its fire, its intensity and instability. When he first came to England in 1933 I knew him only as a famous playwright of the Left who had fought in the war, been a leader in the short-lived revolutionary government at Munich, and been much in prison. Most of that story is in *I was a German* —a brilliant and courageous book. His most perfect work was the *Swallow Book*, which ranks with Rosa Luxemburg's *Letters from Prison* as the highest lyrical achievement of German revolutionary art. He happened to be in Switzerland when the Nazis came into power and was warned not to go back. Everything he had in the world was taken and he was outlawed. Not quite everything. When he arrived here I remember him speaking of the fate of his friends who had been flogged or murdered. Then he said, "But, see, I am lucky. I have all I need. I have my head to think with, my pen to write with, and my behind to sit down on." He set to work to write in English with varying success. At least one of his new plays went well, but I learnt from watching him how terrible a punishment exile

is to an artist. The tree is pulled up at the roots and it is not easy to grow new ones in a new soil, tradition and language. When we were all getting pretty desperate about Spain last autumn Toller rushed in. Sometimes, he said, individuals can succeed where influential organizations fail, and he visited Cabinet Ministers in Scandinavia, France and England to get their promise of support if America would initiate a big scheme of food ships. He got a lot of publicity for his proposal in America; the Quakers came round handsomely and he wrote full of hope and excitement, claiming only a bit of the success for his own efforts. The food, as we know, came too late. The news of his suicide in the papers on Tuesday was heartbreaking. He was full of vitality and vigour. At forty-six he should have been in his prime as a writer. I had not known he was hard up; reports from Hollywood suggested that he had been doing well, and I should have thought that he could always have made a living as a lecturer. But he was terribly unbusinesslike, quite hopeless in the management of his time and money, and I shall not be surprised to hear that his affairs were in an awful muddle. He is the latest victim of the Nazis, for it is not true that a writer—especially a romantic writer like Toller—only needs his pen and his head and somewhere to sit and write; he needs a world in which he can think and hope.

At the end of August the Nazis completed a pact with the U.S.S.R.

26 AUGUST, 1939

WHEN war began in 1914 Englishmen then knew nothing of war and had no recent memories and images to dry up on their lips the idealistic phrases always used to justify it. Today if there is war no one will think we are fighting for gallant little Poland or for any abstract cause; it will simply be a preference for national self-preservation and a determination that the Nazis shall not crush the life and thought and civilization out of Europe. The only way of ensuring that was to stop it while it could be done without war; to do it through war is the desperate alternative. One of my own chief feelings is utter exasperation. Not to stop the Fascists in 1933, or 1935 or 1936, or 1937, or 1938, to let Spain and Czechoslovakia go, to refuse the Russian alliance which was the one way of confronting Hitler with a major war on two fronts that he would not tackle, and then to place us in a position of having the issue of peace and war

left to Colonel Beck—surely there never was such monumental idiocy. The one last mistake I hope Britain does not make is to begin the bombing. That would help Hitler and have a serious psychological effect in Britain.



26 AUGUST, 1939

THE bitterest part of all this battle has been to see this Government pretending, whenever public opinion has demanded a change of policy, to change the policy and then either abandoning it or caricaturing it when it had won for itself a new lease of life. The truth is that Tories constitutionally believe that they ought to be permanently in office and will do anything to keep there, even to the length of half-heartedly doing things they have denounced as fatal to the nation and making them fatal by half-heartedly doing them. What the actual result of this war, if it comes, will be, no one can remotely prophesy. It is amusing today to read the leading articles in the press in August 1914. I find, for instance, that both the *Nation* and the *New Statesman* were deeply perturbed by finding Britain the ally of Tsarist Russia. The Tsar would insist on a reactionary peace at the end of the war! No, we can prophesy nothing, but I am sure that any good results that do come out of any war are because some people insist on going on thinking and planning at a time when the rest of the world concentrates on preparing for war or fighting it.

On September 3 Britain declared war on Germany

9 SEPTEMBER, 1939

ONE of the things that one will never forget about these days is the contrast between the great loveliness of the summer and the pall of horror accompanying it. On the first night war was declared I looked up at the captive balloons, silver in the sunset, and thought that it must be a peace gala that we were celebrating. Even as night fell and the blackout became complete, London remained peculiarly lovely. The dark, deserted streets in the moonlight had a mysterious new beauty and it was not until one sat down behind one's own blackened windows that one realized that we had entered on a period beginning, as in August 1914, with a new sense of purpose

and comradeship, but with the knowledge that we have in front of us a vista of monotony and tragedy which, whatever our personal views or occupations, will test nerves and endurance to the limit.

23 SEPTEMBER, 1939

I WAS talking to a Left-wing bookseller whose sandals and beard have made him a conspicuous figure for years now. "Look at all that stock," he lamented, "what can I do with it?" There were piles of Communist Party literature, pamphlets, papers and books; adulations of Soviet Russia, pictures of Soviet Russia, explanations of Soviet Russia; speeches of Stalin, Left Book Club selections, histories of the Russian Revolution in which Stalin's role was enormously exaggerated and Trotsky never mentioned. "No one will touch it," he said. Sighing, he added: "I found an old copy of the *Daily Worker* just now. August. It had an article by J. R. Campbell saying that the suggestion that Stalin might come to a secret agreement with Hitler was a vile slander. People don't know what to think." Officially, of course, Party members are still being told what to think. The Nazi-Soviet pact was "a blow for peace and Socialism". I transcribe these words, though they seem to me to have no meaning. Rapidly they are beginning to have no meaning for anyone else either. And I find a certain amount of human satisfaction at the downfall of the pundits. They have been so arrogant and unctuous in their day. The *Labour Monthly* and the *Daily Worker* had had their pat "dialectical explanation" for everything, and never allowed that disagreement with them could arise from anything but imbecility or treachery. And what contempt their editorials radiated! How short a time since I smiled to myself to hear a well-known Communist rashly commit himself on the platform of a gigantic stadium to the assurance that whatever else changed, it was always and for ever certain that the U.S.S.R. would stand fast against Fascism! The present situation is rather like one in which the most unco' guid of the elders of the kirk has been caught in carnal sin. The town is shocked, it knows that morals have suffered a terrible blow, it holds up its hands; but at the back of its mind there is a faint but distinct feeling which is not wholly that of dissatisfaction.



23 SEPTEMBER, 1939

WE have all agreed that the evacuation of schoolchildren and mothers with babies was a great achievement, admirably carried out. In the circumstances, when great raids were expected immediately on the outbreak of war, it is not perhaps surprising that the problems arising out of prolonged evacuation should not have been thought out. Some of them were discussed in the House of Commons last week. They are extraordinarily interesting from the point of view of a social observer: they are also serious and will have to be tackled on a big scale. In many cases, of course, the children have settled down well, and local problems can be cleared up locally. But the problems are very widespread. A very common complaint—I hear it wherever I go—is about the verminous children and, even worse, the children with infectious or contagious diseases. One village to my knowledge received 600 Liverpool children, of whom no fewer than 485 had such complaints. This of course happened because the war began in the holidays before the Medical Officer had a chance to deal with the usual slum diseases. It seems clear that we can never again ask the country people to accept children into their houses until they have been medically examined, preferably in their home towns, or, if that is not possible, on arrival in the evacuation areas. There are other minor difficulties about the children which will become major problems unless they are dealt with. First, there is the difficulty which working-class householders find in keeping middle-class lads on 8s. 6d. a week. I know of one case where a family with an income of 46s. a week was trying to satisfy the appetite of a secondary schoolboy of seventeen. Last Sunday, the parents arrived in a nice car, and having shared the Sunday dinner, thanked the foster-mother for the trouble she had taken and gave the boy 6d. pocket-money. The foster-mother remarked that the boy would need a hair-cut. "Oh, he can take that out of the pocket-money," replied the father and drove off. I can add many other less spectacular examples: a farm labourer, for instance, whom I know well and who was delighted to take in two little girls for an emergency, now complains bitterly that the parents, who get their usual pay at home, give nothing for the children's upkeep and come down for a day's

outing on Sundays and expect two good meals for nothing! Some of the children do a good deal of damage one way or another and cottagers want to know who is going to pay for it. If you have about 30s. a week, as the labourers have in our village after paying their insurance money, you've not much left for new mattresses and so forth and you cannot afford to have all the week's meat eaten on Sunday. This last point presumably will be met when rationing comes in.

30 SEPTEMBER, 1939

I AM charmed with the dear old lady who came up to London the other day for the first time since the war began. "If these Germans think they can frighten me by sitting up in those balloons all the time," she said, "they're very much mistaken."

14 OCTOBER, 1939

HERE is a stroke of imagination in high places! At one o'clock every day, except Saturdays and Sundays, and at 4.30 on Tuesdays and Fridays, there is now music at the National Gallery. Miss Myra Hess, who has organized these concerts, and Sir Kenneth Clark, who has given them a home, deserve every congratulation. Already they must know how grateful we are, for at the first concert—though there had been little publicity—there was an audience of a thousand. I found the occasion deeply moving. On the walls the carved frames, emptied of their altarpieces, bore witness to the ravages of a war that is aimed at every token of civilization. But as the first bars of Scarlatti sounded under Miss Hess's fingers, they seemed to reconstruct the exiled paintings. One's conviction was reinforced that the arts are an escape not from reality but into reality; these exalted edifices of sound made sense again of human life. They were the clear voice of reason in a crazy world, expelling our misanthropy. One's belief in the worth of man was thus restored—at the cost of a shilling. After the lovely Scarlatti came Bach, more massively constructed and resistant than any palpable fabric, and then the *Appassionata*, magnificently executed. Here I found myself reminded of the condition of humanity—the first movement seeming

a call to fortitude, the second a dirge for those about to die, though this breaks away into abstract beauty. Today I think many people find their finest solace in music, most of all in that which is least directly expressive of human struggles and hopes.

21 OCTOBER, 1939

WHAT an extraordinary spectacle this is! Thousands of children in the towns with no schools to go to, playing in the streets by day and, often not so innocently, by night. No organization, no discipline, nothing to interest or guide them. You ask why the schools are not opening again? Because the Government very naturally thinks that numbers of children in a building offer too good a target for the bomber, and because if the schools open the slow drift back to the towns will be immediately intensified. Something is now being done, something strangely unorganized and primitive. Parents are being asked to lend a room for lessons and small classes are organized in them. I have just come across a L.C.C. teacher, who is authorized to walk about the streets, find children playing and ask them whether they would like to come to school. Having collected a contingent, he takes them to a house and gives them lessons and then gives another half a dozen a turn of school. Sometimes he collects the children round a pile of sandbags. Really, Hitler does put us to a lot of inconvenience. As a young woman remarked the other day, "It's a perfect scream of a war!"

6 JANUARY, 1940

RECENTLY I had a conversation with a Fascist who had joined up with Sir Oswald Mosley and talked very freely of his plans. There was, as he said, no need for reticence since there was no secrecy about the programme. For the same reason there is no need for me to be reticent. He spoke with some confidence about the success of the word "refujew", which was going over well in places like Manchester, Leeds and the East End of London, where there is already a prejudice against Jews. The refujews are of course responsible for the war, control international finance, created Bolshevism and so on and so forth. "Of course," he said, "we should not use such a line

of propaganda in Hertford or Hereford; there some quite different grievance has to be exploited, tithes or what-not." I asked him whether he believed all this stuff about the Jews. He said that it did not matter at all whether it was true or not, all that mattered was whether it went over and brought grist to the Fascist mill. "The truth of what you say is of no importance at all?" "None at all," he assured me. "Are you equally indifferent to the incidental results of your propaganda?" I asked. "If for instance a large number of innocent and helpless people are mobbed and beaten up or murdered as a result of your lies, that doesn't worry you either?" "Not in the slightest," he said. "Somebody has to suffer in any revolution and it may as well be the Jews. The end justifies the means." "But what," I said, "is the end?" The end was Fascist power, but I could not find that he had any clear idea of what they would do with power when they got it. "The end would no doubt justify the means if the means would achieve the end," I said, "but don't you see that these means will not produce any end that you desire?" "How is that?" he asked. "Well," I said, "if you tell me that you will always lie in order to do down your opponents and don't mind how much suffering and misery you cause, if you will indeed stop at nothing, then there is no social or moral relationship between us?" "No," he said, "that is so, if we are on opposite sides." "Then," I said, "I know that you will choose some convenient moment when my back is turned to stick a knife into it." "Yes," he said, "if it suits me." "Do you not see then that that leaves me with no alternative but to seek a moment when I can conveniently destroy you before you destroy me, and that in such circumstances all loyalty, decency, mutual trust and, indeed, all the foundations of any stable society disappear?" He agreed that that was a difficulty. "Even supposing you do get power, then," I said, "you will all have won by treachery and violence and none of you will trust each other. Each of you will know that the other is ready to stick a knife into his neighbour's back the moment it suits him. The only possible result of such tactics of revolution is that you will go through the experience of Germany and Russia, suspicions lead to 'informing' and informing to plotting and plotting to purges and blood-baths and so on to more blood-baths until finally you get to Rauschning's Nihilism." He seemed a bit bothered about this. It was, he said, a real snag.



27 APRIL, 1940

I HAD a talk this week to Charles Jarman, National Organizer of the Seamen's Union, about the position of the Norwegian and Danish seamen after Hitler's Scandinavian venture. He tells me that there are some 32,000 members of the Norwegian Seamen's Union and between 5,000 to 6,000 whalers now on their way home from their annual expedition to the Antarctic. There won't be any "quisling" among these, for the solidarity of the Norwegian and British seamen has been one of the striking features of our period. Only last year the first international wage agreement was signed through the co-operation of the two unions. When the invasion occurred, the Norwegian Union's funds were seized and the seamen were left in their ships all over the world without any prospect of receiving pay. The same is true of the Danes. Within a week the International Transport Federation had arranged to re-establish the Norwegian Union in London and guarantee both all the officers and men the prevailing rates of pay in British money. Jarman told me of one illuminating incident about the sailors. Into the little office in Bermondsey walked a seaman to pay up the last three months' dues. "I expect you are hard up now," he remarked; "here's twelve months in advance." I do not think we fully understand the feeling of the seamen, whether belligerent or neutral, about the German methods of conducting naval war. In the last war it was so strong that a conference of seamen from all over the world was held in London, which agreed that not a ton of food or anything else should be carried to help the men who were murdering seamen all over the world. This time the methods of war are even more brutal. Eighty per cent of the Norwegian seamen who lost their lives have died of exposure because their ships had been torpedoed, in defiance of the convention signed two years ago, miles from land and their boats machine-gunned. The feeling is correspondingly intense. Jarman told me that he was sure that the German seamen felt intensely their sense of isolation from other seamen. For there is a powerful solidarity of the sea. Men from Hamburg and district have always been democratic and they know precisely what seamen of other countries think of the practices of their Government. Now thousands of these German seamen are sitting in enforced idleness in

neutral ports all over the world. The only reason why they do not mutiny, a Norwegian trade union organizer who had visited Germans in Vigo told me, was their fear of revenge by our seamen. They had been told that, after what had been done by the Nazis, the British sailors would cut off their right hands and their little toes, and they have been induced to believe it.



1 JUNE, 1940

COMING back to England, I was astounded once again at the imperturbability of the British people. I no longer think that they are unmoved because they are unawakened: it is mainly that a sense of British invincibility has always been part of their make-up; and the man-in-the-street is determined to carry on with his allotment or his bicycling club or his Sunday walk as long as possible. It is his way of showing that Hitler can't get him down. Only in London and in a university city have I met that look of harassed anticipation of the worst which I first saw among German intellectuals in the winter of 1932. Imagination and education are the only things to save us in the long run, but in such a moment as this they make life more difficult. The uneducated man judges by experience and just suspends judgment when things fall outside that experience. The man of imagination and the intellectual with his trained mind and his contacts with other intellectuals and "people in the know" is too much accustomed to give judgments on everything and on all occasions. Less solidly based he often lives in a côterie of talk. Intellectuals are an essential class, but they may be a confounded nuisance if not given work to do. Many of us, whose hopes have been thwarted and whose fears have been fulfilled during the last ten years, are easily accused of "defeatism", because people do not understand that for our generation the war itself is defeat. Individualists who have pledged themselves, if they are any good, to following their own judgment, telling the truth as they see it and serving the causes they hold good, suddenly confront a situation in which they cannot be individualists any more. One well-known pacifist told me the other day that he was now supporting the war: "the herd instinct in time of danger", he explained. Similarly, when I am asked how the dickens it comes that I can so far forget my anti-imperialism and Socialism as to write an article strongly supporting

Mr. Winston Churchill, I reply that I have not abandoned my faith and that I may in the future, if circumstances change, totally alter my view of the right kind of action, but that when I and my kith and kin are confronted with the immediate danger of extermination, I am not so decadent that I cannot welcome as my temporary leader a man who has courage and the qualities of leadership.

8 JUNE, 1940

LAST autumn I remember being told in Cambridge that Lord Haw-Haw had made a special announcement that Cambridge would be bombed. Since then I have heard similar stories in my favourite village and in many other places, and I gather that there is scarcely a district in the country where it is not commonly believed that Lord Haw-Haw has tried to frighten the population with similar threats, often with, it is said, remarkably accurate details of the countryside and possible objectives. I do not often listen to Haw-Haw myself, but since one of his aims is to terrify I assumed that such threats were part of his stock-in-trade. We now know that no such threats have ever come from Haw-Haw, and all the stories about his uncanny knowledge of places, and of the speed (said to mean that information was sent to him by private wireless) are untrue. The latest example of such a rumour is that Haw-Haw has told people that the local town-hall clock is two minutes slow or something of the sort. This is believed in scores of places. Actually he has never yet mentioned a clock in any broadcast—any more than anyone has seen a nun with hairy arms. Someone knows someone who knows someone who saw the nuns or heard the broadcast. . . . But who starts these rumours? The Ministry of Information has been investigating, and believe that they have traced one to its source. A man in Mansfield has been convicted and fined £10 for falsely attributing to Haw-Haw information about a decision of the local Council made only one hour and a quarter before the Hamburg broadcast. On cross-examination he admitted that "his wife told him something about what a Mrs. Robins had said should be cleared up by the police". Rumour tracing is a fascinating sport.

27 JULY, 1940

THREE-QUARTERS of Hitler's speech last Friday was devoted to recalling German victories and assigning the credit and decorations for them. The real credit, of course, went only to Hitler; he becomes more godlike every day. Göring was specially praised as the creator of "my air force", and, after Göring and Ribbentrop, so many Nazi leaders were mentioned that it must be difficult for anyone to be jealous in this new Valhalla. There is Hitler and the Rest. The order of precedence given to the Nazi leaders is, however, interesting. First Hess, then Lutze, head of the S.A.; Himmler, chief of the Gestapo came third (formal applause only), while Dr. Goebbels, who surprisingly received the loudest cheer, came sixth on the list. Hitler's speech was made for home consumption. If he had meant it to lead to peace talks with Britain at this stage he would have put forward actual proposals. Instead, he was content to paint the picture of a unified Europe now unnecessarily attacked and bombed by Britain. He made considerable play with Mr. Churchill's surely unwise remark about fighting the war, if necessary, from Canada, and suggested that in the end Mr. Churchill would no doubt be in Canada, far from the common people who might not share his wishes about continuing to resist. He prophesied that the war must go on until one or other nation was completely destroyed, and said: "I shall make a great prophecy; I shall destroy a great Empire I never meant to destroy." One remembers the oracle which Croesus consulted. Croesus, you will remember, was also told that he would destroy a great Empire; it turned out to be his own.

16 NOVEMBER, 1940

To separate the personal from the public life of a statesman is often difficult; it is more difficult than usual in the case of Mr. Chamberlain. That he led us disastrously is obvious; that his shy reserve and lack of personal magnetism made him an easy character to misunderstand is also clear. I know of one distinguished man who in the course of years of intimacy had come to feel a great respect and affection for Mr. Chamberlain, without even guessing until nearly

the end of his life that the Prime Minister entertained a similar feeling for him. Mr. Churchill was much criticized, I think rightly from a public point of view, for retaining Mr. Chamberlain so long in his Cabinet. I believe that there was more than the obvious public reason that Mr. Chamberlain represented a section of the community whose co-operation for the time was indispensable; there was also the personal reason that Mr. Churchill's feelings about Mr. Chamberlain, which were certainly lurid enough at the time of Munich, changed completely after the experience of working in the same Cabinet. Labour Members of the Government, who bitterly abused him, also changed their minds when they worked with him. All his colleagues agree that he was an exceptionally able chairman of committee; one reason, as a friend pointed out, was that he could deal admirably with facts on paper. He missed all the subtleties, but he could keep a committee to an agenda. He was a man of the highest personal integrity, sensitive to attacks and eager for affection. There was little background to his mind except business. He had read little. No one is to be blamed for attacking Mr. Chamberlain as well as his policy, because it was so peculiarly a personal policy. He took his own line; he was contemptuous of opposition; he was obviously mistaken and floundered in a field where he was no expert. His persistence was incredible. His realism was a dreamland. He supported every obstructive vested interest; many of his associates were much less honest than he; he seldom appointed anyone except a reactionary of second-rate ability. He had not the knack of sympathetic speech or appealing argument. If, when he had come back from Munich, he had said that the alternative was war and that war would be even worse, and left it at that—which was what Sir Samuel Hoare did—he would have won far more support; but his claim to have brought a new era of peace when we all knew that he had lost the last hope of avoiding war, and had passed our best friends over to the Gestapo, was more than many of us could stand. His complacency was exasperating. Could it be as absolute as it seemed? Was it a mask? I asked a friend who saw much of him. No, I was told, it was unshakable and absolute. He was quite single-minded. Until Prague he never doubted for a moment that he was right and would succeed. Mr. Chamberlain has certainly been misunderstood, and often been abused for the wrong reasons. He believed in what he was doing; his primary desire was to avoid war. His pacifism was real; it was not a disguise for a Machiavellian

plot as some of his critics imagined. Like Mr. Baldwin and the rest of us, he knew what this war would be. It was because he put the preservation of peace first, that Mr. Baldwin was anxious for Mr. Chamberlain to succeed him. It remains true that his premiership was the most disastrous in British history.

It was his Spanish policy that most of us found the hardest to forgive. After the League had been scrapped, Russia rebuffed, and all the other chances missed, when we actually reached the point of Munich it had become true that war was the alternative. That was never true about Spain. I believe that this war might have been averted, that France might still be independent and that the prospects of freedom in the world would have been infinitely more bright, if Britain had not played the Fascist game in Spain. It is in connection with Spain rather than Czechoslovakia that my own impression of Mr. Chamberlain is most vivid. I had been in Barcelona on Christmas Day 1938; Italian and German aeroplanes made their daily raids; Italian guns could be heard in the mountains; Negrin had not pretended that defeat could any longer be avoided. I crossed to Tunis, where M. Daladier made a speech about the French Empire in which he forgot Spain and also the Arabs who were listening to him. He spoke much of French glory and looked, as a friend with me remarked, like a man who had a murder on his conscience. I went on to Rome and was among the onlookers when Mr. Chamberlain arrived and walked past us with the Duce. In the evening there was a grand reception and much talk of the gentleman's agreement with Mussolini and of our friendship with Italy. Before he left, Mr. Chamberlain saw some of us journalists and said that his principal fear for Europe—he seemed to think that we had cleared up our immediate difficulties with Germany—was the Spanish war. In a word, he thought it necessary for the Spanish Republic to be quickly destroyed so that his agreement with Italy might quickly come to fruition. Yet to me and many of my colleagues the war against Fascism had already been raging for at least two and a half years in Spain. To everyone except Mr. Chamberlain, Mussolini's game was obvious; no informed person could honestly doubt that he was Hitler's ally. Granted that Mr. Chamberlain believed that he was keeping the peace, grant, as I do, him all the integrity and sincerity in the world, agree that he loved birds and had all the domestic virtues—grant all that and it still remains difficult to dissociate the man from his policy.

Part Two
LONDON UNDER FIRE

LONDON UNDER FIRE

1 OCTOBER, 1938

THE distribution of gas-masks and the sight of trenches being dug in the park finally brought the imminence of war home to the British people this week. Beneath the superficial calm, which the British public seldom loses, lay a feeling of utter consternation and nausea. No people was ever more pacific, no people more completely aware of the futility and horror of war. If England does become involved in war, it will only be because the common people cannot see any alternative to resisting the threat of force at some point. We all know that war itself would solve nothing: the only problem has been, and is, how to avoid it. For myself, ever since the rise of Hitler, I have felt sure that Fascism unchecked must sooner or later mean war. I have lived with only one thought in front of me—how it was possible to defeat Fascism before the only method available was war itself. If it came to that I knew we should have failed because once war on this scale has broken out no one can foresee its direction or be sure of keeping in check the hysteria and hatred which it engenders. The failure to act while action was safe has brought us to a pass in which one has to face the risk of war in order to avoid it. That for every man who saw the last war has been an almost overwhelming strain. Today one dares to hope for another respite and, therefore, another chance of avoiding final catastrophe.



2 DECEMBER, 1939

I STOOD astonished. It was long after blackout time. The rest of the street was decorously dark. Very few chinks of light shone between the blinds and curtains and blankets and bits of paper and rag and linoleum which the inhabitants of the Borough of Holborn use to darken their windows, showing thereby their sense of communal

responsibility, their respect for orders and their recognition of the fact of war. And yet broad and brilliant across the path in front of me lay a shaft of light. One could have read by it. What would happen to discipline, to the nation's war effort, to Britain and civilization if this kind of thing were allowed? What imprudence, what effrontery! Where were the air-raid wardens? Was no one to be arrested or even rebuked? Muttering something about anarchy and German spies, I walked into the light itself and found myself looking up at the bland, shameless face of the Moon, shining down on me and the rest of mankind for all the world as if she did not care whether there was a war on or not.



17 AUGUST, 1940

STATISTICS are fallible things, but I derive a certain comfort from a friend's calculation that there is one pigeon to every 90 inhabitants of London. After all, as he put it, if 100,000 pigeons so rarely score a direct hit, why should I worry about the Germans?



7 SEPTEMBER, 1940

I WAS in the British Museum library when one daylight air-raid warning was given, and nothing could have been more instant and military than the way in which the whole body of readers, marshalled by the staff, marched off through long galleries, past the Assyrian bulls, who seemed to behold the spectacle with a cynical eye, past the Greek and Roman antiquities, past the finger-rings and pottery and terracottas, or such of them as remain, into a quite spacious hall reinforced as a shelter. One hardly recognized the pleasant attendants in their grim-looking tin-hats and with their armlets, but one generous provision was made in this British Museum shelter in the shape of tables with chairs at them so that the student of hieroglyphics could still pursue them. It is true that no reader was allowed to take a book from the dome, but many of them took their own manuscripts, and it was very reassuring to see them immediately begin upon their interrupted work as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened. At the shelter under Lincoln's Inn Chapel, too, a table is provided where the legal gentlemen from the sur-

rounding chambers can get on with their work. From Whitehall, however, there are complaints that it is compulsory to go to the shelter and that the light there is so bad that one cannot continue to read or dictate.



21 SEPTEMBER, 1940

PLEASE, Mr. Censor, now that bombs have fallen in so many parts of London can we mention that the building of *The New Statesman and Nation* is no longer in occupation? It is not destroyed, you know, but the police and firemen and the broken glass and crater co-operate to forbid its use, and we would like to explain this to readers and contributors. Yes, we rescued the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Dictionary of Slang* and the office mascot and we have a delightful excuse for not replying to a lot of tiresome letters. . . . Can't we mention this? Not at present? You are consulting the Air Ministry and will let me know? The *Daily Herald* also suffers from broken windows and the *Evening Standard* caught it hot? Thank you. Thursday morning, going to press and still no permission and no word to those anxious souls who brood over our physical and spiritual welfare. No sooner had we gone to press than the dailies got their permission, blast them (no, this is no longer an appropriate phrase), and this week we, too, are allowed to refer to our change of address.



21 SEPTEMBER, 1940

LOOKING out the other night on a fantastic scene of moonlight and searchlight, of white stars and of red fires in the East I listened to the bombs and wondered how much, honestly, it mattered if most of London were burned down. Had I not always wanted London reborn? If we could get the people away, would not the world be a cleaner, more wholesome and happier place if three-quarters of London disappeared in a fire bigger than the one that cleaned out the plague and gave Wren his chance nearly two hundred and fifty years ago? How much of London built since Wren is worth a tear? Wren's London still matters; how deeply one cared about the threat to St. Paul's and how thrilled one was at the heroism of its

saviours. Some of the other City churches matter; there are old fragments which carry history with them; there are, of course, the Regency squares and the remains of Regency planning; a few modern buildings would be missed. How much more that we could not immeasurably improve upon in rebuilding? What a terrific opportunity! A less crowded and replanned London! If only I could get the people away and then guide Hitler's aeroplanes! How willingly would I see Plaistow and Kensington and Shoreditch and Earl's Court consigned to the same glorious bonfire! And what fun to clear away the rubbish round St. Paul's and leave it, as Wren meant, with a great open space before it, a masterpiece as splendid as St. Peter's now that Mussolini has opened the superb vista to the Vatican. Then comes the horrid question whether we have a Christopher Wren about and whether, if we have, we should treat him in rebuilding London even as well as our forefathers did, or whether all the ground landlords and financiers and business folk with their vested interests would be allowed once again to rebuild the Victorian gothic towers and the brick slums that Hitler had kindly demolished for us. A Wren Act of Parliament should be passed at once to begin the replanning of London and no one should be permitted to rebuild haphazard. Well, here is a dream of reconstruction to sustain one during the raids and the prospect of a fight that will be worth fighting after the war. But that depends on Hitler burning down a lot more of London and being defeated in doing so. It may happen.



21 SEPTEMBER, 1940

AT a foreign embassy yesterday one secretary was heard to say to another: "As petrol begins to get short, they'll have to come to an arrangement. Let the R.A.F. do the bombing of London and the Luftwaffe of Berlin." "Ah," said the second, "the thing is, could they trust Hitler to keep his side of the bargain?"



28 SEPTEMBER, 1940

THE other day I met A who took me off to keep a tea appointment with B on the fourth floor of Peter Robinson's. We arrived to find a substantial chunk of Peter Robinson's littering Oxford Circus. But

Lewis's is the most spectacular. It stands today like the ruins of a Greek temple; a few wide arches and little more. On the way back to my flat (which I had not seen for several days), I wondered whether it remained standing. Bombs had fallen all round it. Supposing it has gone, I said to myself, does it really matter? What shall I have to lose? A great many books; some of which I value highly. But most of the political books are now out of date and can be referred to elsewhere. It would be a nuisance to lose my clothes, but if my ancient dress-suit goes on a bonfire, who cares? I don't expect to have much need of boiled shirts and dinner jackets. I have a liking for some of the furniture and pictures. But the only thing that really matters when I get down to bed-rock is an unpublished MS., and that may not really matter much to anyone but myself. How unimportant is property as long as you have a salary which will enable you to use somebody else's property, either in an hotel or elsewhere! And how all-important it is if you have no regular income! But the real moral is that it is fatal to go on considering this war as an interruption of normal life. In that case everything seems intolerable; the inconvenience of the telephone that continuously rings the engaged signal instead of the dialling tone; the inconvenience of delayed posts and the hours spent on station platforms or traffic diversions. But if you think of this as a new kind of world altogether and do not expect anything to be normal, life to those who have not suffered personal bereavement and who have a job may be tolerable and even exciting. The first condition of life, I am sure, is no more to expect anything to be comfortable or normal than you would if you started out on a voyage of adventure in an unexplored country. And that, you see, is exactly what we are doing. The country ahead certainly looks grim enough.



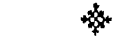
28 SEPTEMBER, 1940

THIS story was told to me by a Chinese friend—otherwise I should not have dared to tell it. In a street of a certain character (as a certain kind of journalist would call it) an A.R.P. warden noticed an imperfect blackout. He said to a woman who answered his knock: "There's a chink in that room up there." "No," she said, "it's not a Chink: it's a Japanese gentleman."



26 OCTOBER, 1940

SOMETIMES one learns from experience—too late. But not too late to pass on the experience usefully. I boast of being the only man in London who has been bombed off a lavatory seat while reading Jane Austen. She went into the bath; I went through the door. If *all* the windows had been open a few inches top and bottom, those of them that were broken might still be intact. If the chimneys had been swept less soot would have come down on to the furniture. Internal doors should also be left open and valuable furniture be placed against solid walls and in the spaces in between windows.



29 MARCH, 1941

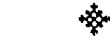
I WONDER what people mean by "Bloomsbury"? I asked myself as I looked at the dismantled flat. Certainly it is no longer what Margaret Irwin used to describe in the twenties as the place where "all the couples were triangles and lived in squares". Whatever it was once, it is gone now. Perhaps Göring, whose hand always went to his revolver belt when anyone mentioned culture, had a special down on Bloomsbury? Anyway, there have been quite a lot of incidents since the blitz began and no particular sign of the decadence among this varied population that *The Times* seems to expect. The last incident blew the windows of the flat in; the furniture has long been taken away. But the walls are still lined with books, the fireplace is still intact, with its painted design by an English artist who (Bloomsbury or not) is one of the few whose work is nationally known. As happens to old houses, the atmosphere clung to the place in spite of bare boards. Bloomsbury was after all one of the few sources of serious literary and artistic achievement in the country; and once, long before my day, this house could have been described as the very centre of Bloomsbury. Several books were written in it, including, I think, *Lady into Fox* (a good book, surely, even if born in Bloomsbury). But this house was still better known for publishing books; some of those who most disparage Bloomsbury used to subscribe eagerly for its productions. In my time Blooms-

bury has changed its character, and the gatherings I recall in this flat were rather political than literary. One forces itself back into my mind today. Five years ago, March 1936, Hitler entered the Rhineland. Edgar Mowrer and Knickerbocker came over from Paris to persuade England to back the French and turn the Nazis out of the Rhineland. Mowrer was vehement and Knickerbocker cynical; Herbert Morrison took part and many others who are not now regarded by *The Times* as mere playboys lacking—what is the phrase? —"those stoic virtues which the whole nation is now called upon to practise". Looking back I see that that was the crucial moment for stopping Hitler without war.



THERE they stood, in rows, the familiar volumes that belong to a period when one could still lecture about the past and theorize about the future. On the top, seventy volumes of Voltaire in faded calf; the whole lot only cost me fifteen shillings. But then Voltaire went through scores of editions and sold millions of copies. He was only a journalist, perhaps the greatest who ever lived. He had no faith in the human race; without illusions he yet knew that it was his job to attack cruelty and clericalism, and tyranny and war, and to expose shams. Next to him is d'Holbach, the complete and dogmatic materialist, and Helvétius, who thought that men were all born alike, rational beings without inherited dispositions. And near-by stands John Stuart Mill, the great apostle of democracy, who yet saw its limitations, and Robert Owen, who was British enough to believe that you could get Socialism by explaining to royal persons, employers and the like that co-operation was better than competition, and the Webbs, who thought that State Socialism would come without danger to democracy because Parliament and the trade unions and the co-operatives would look after the interests of the producers and consumers. And on the shelf below are Marx and Lenin, who regarded freedom as a mere function of the economic order, and foresaw with surprising clarity the evolution of Capitalism and the struggle of classes. What they could not see was that the technical changes which would be necessary when international capitalism broke down might be carried through by the capitalists themselves without a surrender of power to the Proletariat; they did not foresee that the workers would become more and not less helpless with the

growth of a large-scale production and development of a powerful salariat and the mastery of the technique of propaganda by ambitious men. They could not prophesy a monopoly State running the world in the interests of people who minded far more about power than about money. And on the bottom shelf a row of bound volumes of *The New Statesman and Nation*, written by the lesser descendants of Voltaire and Robert Owen and Marx, by people who wanted both liberty and equality and spent their lives looking for ways of changing society without violence, of planning without dictatorship and of winning economic and political freedom at the same time. There they stood, these records of men's mental struggle, waiting to be carted away, not to safety, but at least to a shelter where the rain did not beat through the shattered windows. They are worth saving; one can no longer wander along the Quays at Paris and pick up cheap editions of Voltaire, and Hitler has destroyed more books in the Fire of London than he did when the Nazis burnt the finest achievements of German thought in the streets of Berlin. But the destruction of books matters comparatively little; it is a destruction of the minds which could have read them that is the real crime of the Nazis. In England one may still read Voltaire and even Marx and Mill and *The New Statesman and Nation.*



24 MAY, 1941

FROM the roof of this office one looks across at what is left of the Royal College of Surgeons. The Nazi bombers have done their job so thoroughly that it almost seems that they wanted to destroy the evidence that men were descended from apes. But rows upon rows of gaping skulls tracing the ascent of Man from the brutes look down sardonically on the evidence of Man's fulfilment. Buried in the ruins are specimens from which Darwin traced his origins, and the collections assembled by Sir Arthur Keith, as curator of the Museum, in which he followed up the evidence from the skeletons and skulls, have been shattered. Two hundred years of patient collection—starting from the first collection by John Hunter, father of modern surgery—and thousands of years of Man's history are in the ruins. Even the rarest of John Hunter's collection, which were in the sub-basement for safety, have suffered. The fate of the Royal College is a cynical comment on war. For not only were there here the proofs

of Man's upward struggle, but it was the fount of information for doctors, surgeons and scientists of the whole world—including Germany—in their efforts to help humanity out of suffering. Even since the outbreak of war scientists from abroad—U.S., Australia and elsewhere—have risked the U-boats to check up on evidence which could be confirmed only at the R.C.S. Among the irreplaceable remains which have been lost are the skulls of Tasmanian and Australian primitives, which palaeontologists may never find again. That sort of thing is more important than the loss of historic curios like Captain Cook's kangaroo, the first gorilla brought to Europe, a 2,900-year-old mummy or even the skeleton of Richard Cœur de Lion's consort. And who cares about the survival of the Irish giant —7 ft. 8½ in.—or even the Sicilian dwarf—19 in.? I saw one of the curators pick up a charred and shattered skull and gaze upon it like Hamlet upon Yorick—The Ascent of Man—*Per Ardua ad Astra.*



30 MAY, 1942

A CORRESPONDENT writes: If you are publishing stories of the blitz here is the most macabre one of the war:

> A woman was overheard on a bus discussing the fate of her sister-in-law in an air-raid. "Talk about laugh! She'd been paying into a club for thirteen years because she wanted to be buried proper. And it took 'em two days to dig her out!"



9 OCTOBER, 1943

AN allied soldier, now stationed in this country, sauntered into the West London Synagogue for the New Year Holyday Services, and asked, "What sort of a show have you here? Is it good?"

"It should be," replied a steward. "It's been running for nearly six thousand years!"



1 JANUARY, 1944

TIME: Christmas. Scene: a bus crowded with tired workers and a few victims of the squander-bug. Enter noisy child and harassed mother. The only two seats vacant are one behind the other on the gangway side. Child is fidgety. He wants a slice of apple; he wants a sweet. Finally, after his mother has made various futile attempts to suppress him, he cries plaintively, "Mum, I want ter look aht of the winder." His neighbour, who has only just borne with this continued irritation, turns to the child and says with scorn, "You bloody kids, you 'as all the bloody sweets, you 'as all the bloody oranges, and now you wants the bloody winders too."



26 FEBRUARY, 1944

FOR the first time since 1941 I happened to hear Haw-Haw on the wireless the other night. He had the same edge on his voice; its "nastiness" is, I am quite sure, enough to make most British listeners disbelieve what he says. He made some good propaganda points about Italy, and then he proceeded to describe the panic and breakdown which recent German raids were supposed to have produced in London. The effect was quite ludicrous. I had just left an entirely normal London after one of these great raids. Why do the Germans think it worth while to tell us this poppycock? As propaganda inside Germany it is intelligible enough. A raid of some sort, admitted by the British and reported by neutrals, enables Goebbels to placate public opinion. But the only effect on Londoners of being told that they are in a state of panic, living in Undergrounds and queueing up for soup kitchens is to make them laugh. I think the probable explanation is that Haw-Haw and his colleagues themselves believe what they are told to say about these raids. After all, propaganda is better done by people who believe their own nonsense than by people with their tongue in their cheek.



1 JULY, 1944

EXTRAORDINARY that the Germans should apparently still be under the delusion that they are more likely to persuade Britain to listen

to peace-feelers (via Spain or other Catholic sources) if they plaster the South of England with robot planes and follow those up with more powerful rocket shells. Anybody could have told them what a well-known Swiss newspaper has just published from its British correspondent—that this was the worst blow the Nazis have ever dealt the German people, since the effect is to harden British opinion and make certain that the peace will be worse for Germany. Yet so besotted are the present rulers of Germany that this message in the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* apparently threw them into a panic. A special propaganda conference, Zürich reports, was called to find an answer to this statement of the obvious. Clearly, if you want soldiers to fight like tigers, destroy their homes, as we have the homes of German soldiers or as Goebbels pretends he has the homes of the British. If the Germans should ever really succeed, as their propaganda suggests, in setting England ablaze and reducing London to rubble, then the British could be relied upon to fight as the Russians did in Stalingrad. Shattered homes are natural fortresses.



8 JULY, 1944

SCENE: a street in Central London from which a number of respectably dressed and decorous citizens arise, dusting their knees and eyeing each other a little dubiously. Then they burst out laughing, "That's the first time I've ever done that," says one. "Same here," says another. "It's about time we learnt to be sensible. We've always stood up and trusted to luck, like silly amateurs, till now. In future I shall always take what cover I can, like a soldier. It only needs a bit of courage not to be afraid someone will think you are afraid." An example was set by a well-known public man who was in a queue the other day when the droning overhead stopped. Shouting a warning to his companions, who were pretending to be unconcerned, he darted to cover; a minute later, when he looked out, the rest of the queue had been more forcibly dispersed. He is still alive and unhurt. Actually the number of people killed by these flying-bombs is very small, and the damage only superficial. The trouble is glass. I cannot imagine why the public is not given far more complete and impressive instructions about blast. Powdered glass may be driven deep into you; doctors tell me that you may literally have to have your face cut right away to save your life, and

that almost all of these ghastly and mostly non-fatal casualties are avoidable. When danger is immediate, lie right down, cover your face, away from glass. Have your windows thickly covered or even taken out where you can; or, if you can't do either, put a wardrobe or some other heavy object between you and the window—which, by the way, should be open. When you have eliminated this one serious risk, then add courage to sense and work on as if nothing was happening. These are the most amateur instructions, but they are fuller than any so far given by Home Security. Secrecy and pretence have done a lot of unnecessary damage and caused many avoidable casualties. Tell people that they are in the front line, that they should get their children away and go on as usual with their own job —as far as possible away from glass. Give them figures to show how small is the number of killed and give them detailed instructions about how to avoid blast. The result of a little open and intelligent leadership would be immediate and gratifying.



15 JULY, 1944

Two doodle-bomb stories are worth preserving. The first is the cockney's explanation of his own courage. "I see it like this," he said. "It must take the Germans a lot of trouble to make the bloody things, and then they have to get them into those pits and up into the air, and it is quite a long way from France to London, and if they do get to London, they have still got to find Hackney. And even then, it isn't everyone can find 37 Bulstrode Road, and if they do, ten to one I am in the pub!" The second comes from an American who said, most aptly, that flying-bombs made him feel like the slot in a roulette table. The board goes doodling around and then there is a tense pause, and then—Bing; it's in your slot or someone else's.



21 OCTOBER, 1944

LOOKING at my walls, stripped of plaster by visiting doodle-bugs, it occurred to me that instead of bothering about plasterers who should be busy on more urgent jobs, we might as well accept our lattice of laths and try to make it presentable and useful. After all, people

deliberately strip our ceilings to show the old beams. Surely old laths present similar opportunities. On reflection, I've decided against convolvulus, ramblers, or runner-beans as likely to import an excess of insect life. But if any paint is available, patterns of yellow, black and white would look neat (red, white and blue would be patriotic I know, but a bit blatant) and the holes in between the laths can supply much valuable cupboard space. It is surprising how many papers, cigarette boxes, books and other miscellaneous articles can be conveniently shoved into these interstices. The area next my bed already holds *War and Peace* (3 volumes), the file of my last threatened libel action, my watch (strapped conveniently, face outwards, at night) and there is even room at one spot for a cup of morning tea (if there was anyone to bring it). I doubt if I shall want to go back to a flat, inhospitable expanse of wall.



1 JULY, 1944

A WOMAN, who came from an area where P-planes were dropping about the place, complained that this was "not natural like the old blitz!" For a pilot at 20,000 ft. to drop a ton-bomb in her back garden had become in restrospect part of the Divine order of things, a natural event, familiar and already romanticized in memory. The robot is still an uncanny novelty. People will go on discovering comic reasons for explaining their dislike of the new experience of being shelled until Authority discovers the proper psychological remedy. In 1940, London believed that it was in the front line; many of those with no special duties were evacuated and the rest of us stayed put, with a conscious appreciation of our own part in the defence of England against Nazi invasion. Some of Mr. Churchill's speeches, and later Priestley's broadcasts, gave the cue. Everywhere men and women were braced to endure, to organize and to carry on. In 1944, the psychology is quite needlessly different. We have been induced to believe that the war is over—bar the fighting, which is to be done by somebody else, not in England, but in France, Italy and Russia. People feel they "have had it", and have grown accustomed to talk about the blitz as past history. Those who can speak so that people listen should now get up as they did in 1940–1941, and point out that Southern England is part of the same battlefront as Normandy and that the toughest part of the war is still to come. If the German

threat to send rocket shells does mature, something of the sort will have to be done. I believe the response would be much as it was in 1940. Production would increase and so would popular resolution. We should in our hearts all rejoice that in this war we are not "sending our sons" only, but sharing in some small way in their risks.



1 JULY, 1944

THE long-run significance of the robot plane is not missed by the more intelligent man or woman in the street. A small shopkeeper who deals in wireless and electrical equipment remarked to me the other day: "That's the sort of thing that may end man." I don't think he had been reading Wells on the end of *Homo sapiens*. He simply saw that the principle of pilotless aircraft involves the unlimited capacity of highly organized industrial States to destroy civilized life from one end of the world to the other. An R.A.F. man on the same day made a similar point to me, volunteering the conclusion that "after the war we shall have to prohibit the development of all this sort of thing". Samuel Butler suggested in *Erewhon* that men would end machinery altogether in order to stop the machine taking charge and ending them. But the odd thing about Western man is that it never enters his head when he makes a discovery that he may not desire to pursue it. Say to any child (adult or in short pants) that you have discovered a way of going a few hundred miles an hour faster, or of killing more men more quickly than anyone ever has done before, and he immediately assumes that it will be done. The notion of asking whether anyone would be happier by this development does not occur to him. The Chinese, on the other hand, did decide, when they discovered gunpowder some thousands of years ago, to restrict its use to the making of fire-crackers. This is a very hopeful precedent which prevents my falling back on the theory that this endless itch to inventive progress is an innate human characteristic, explicable by man's simian ancestry. As the Chinese must share this inheritance with us, I have a logical basis for hoping that some day we shall actually stop developing inventions which make us miserable.

POSTSCRIPT

24 JUNE, 1944

THIS week I have been constantly reminded of the remark of a charwoman before the war. "I can't abide this 'ere Hitler," she said, " 'e's such a fidget." Fidget is right, I said to myself last week-end in the country, as I wondered vaguely where the last P-plane fell. She made this classic remark in days when, you recall, the Dictators were still taking the countries in the week-end, while the Democracies were still taking the week-ends in the country. But her attitude is scarcely different now. She still can't abide Hitler, but, judging by a conversation I overheard in a shop the other day, she looks for a scapegoat nearer home. The three charwomen were discussing the robot plane with real disapprobation and commenting on its destructive qualites. "We'll see the Government pays for this," said one of them in a tone that was positively resentful.

Part Three

WAR: FROM HOT TO COLD

1941-1945

1941–1945

22 MARCH, 1941

AT a Tribunal recently the chairman tried to catch out a young conscientious objector: "You know the story of Christ and the centurion? He commended the faith of the centurion, so I suppose He must have approved of his profession." The young man answered, "Christ also commended the faith of the harlot." I was not surprised to hear that this young man was successful in his application.



17 MAY, 1941

LIFE never seemed so unreal, so like a chapter from a novelette, as it has this week. When I get up in the morning I have actually to look at the damage before I can believe that so many of the buildings and places that I most treasured in London have just disappeared off the face of the earth. And then, suddenly, the unconventional arrival of Hess turned the nightmare, for the moment at least, into sheer melodrama. This, surely, is fiction, a dream confusion of Mr. Chamberlain's peace mission to Germany and Peter Fleming's *Flying Visit*. The resemblance is striking enough. In that book Hitler flies over England—Low depicts him coming to earth by parachute—and, like Hess, tries to find his way to the house of an English landlord whom he entertained in Germany. After comic adventures in an English village, he sees the Prime Minister and proves so embarrassing a guest that he is quietly dropped back again into Germany! That, I suppose, is not likely to be Hess's fate and as for the visit to an English friend that, no doubt intended, has been frustrated. But how odd we English are! Hess, it seems, is really quite a nice fellow. A lot of English people went to see him in Germany and found him

charming. He was a great skier and that is an excellent way of meeting the right people. He may have believed in witchcraft, but his religion certainly led him into the friendliest collaboration with Englishmen of goodwill—and good birth. He is also an educated man; he taught geography as a colleague of Haushofer, the great exponent of "geopolitics". According to his theory Asia and Europe make inevitably one great block which, because of her central position, Germany must dominate. A fascinating article on Hess and Geopolitics appeared in this journal on August 26th, 1939. Note that the theory, which has much that is sensible in it, provides just that *inevitable* assurance of victory that the Puritans had from their view of the triumph of God's Saints, that Marxists had from the economic interpretation of history, and that a "mystical" Nazi needs to strengthen him through years of murder and terrorism. Anyway, this man was a "gangster" yesterday; and today he is called an "idealist". The wireless even made the absurd mistake of calling him a "refugee". I've heard some odd remarks about him in the last few days. "Why not send Simon by parachute in exchange?" said one man. Another remark was that we should announce that the whole of Salisbury Plain was open to General Göring.



21 MARCH, 1942

OVERHEARD in the train. First City gentleman, after reading Sir William Beveridge's article in *The Times*, March 17th. "Yes, of course we ought to get rid of party politics." Second City gentleman, "Certainly, but you can't get the Labour Party to see that."

2 JANUARY, 1943

IT is long since any proposal for social change has so hit the target as the Beveridge Report. Approbation comes from unexpected quarters. A friend on the Stock Exchange tells me it is the one great topic of conversation; the markets are at a standstill anyhow, and since even smut is in short supply, social security stands at a premium. After all, they say, America's had a New Deal and Hitler's had a New Order; now Britain must have something or other novelty to offer. A young officer described to me its enthusiastic

reception in his unit. I pointed out that there would probably be powerful vested interests to overcome. The big Insurance Societies were already behaving as shortsightedly as ever, attempting to save their own position even at the risk of defeating the last scheme which was likely to make possible a gradual change of our social order. He replied that two of the officers in his mess were insurance employees; they both took the view that the Beveridge scheme would end their pre-war jobs and finish up the big Insurance Societies, but that they would find State jobs instead. Why not? They were Government employees already and were quite prepared for a state of things in which they would work for the State instead of for private companies after the war.



31 JULY, 1943

"GRAND news! Did you expect it?" "No, it came with the shock of something that happens that you haven't been allowing yourself to expect for fear that it might upset your judgment if you banked on it." "What will happen now?" "The danger, of course, is that we bolster up clerical Fascism under a prettier name and that the peasants of *Fontamara* remain as poor and helpless and bullied as ever. I am not going to throw up my hat until I see us getting rid of that peculiarly self-seeking class of pseudo-aristocratic Italian landlords who have always backed Mussolini." "I suppose the Italian army won't change round and fight on our side against the Germans?" "That would be a stab in the front, wouldn't it?" "What'll happen to Mussolini? I heard somebody say that he had lost his only chance of escape when he failed to make himself Pope." "I'm not sure whether he need be very frightened. When people talk about punishing war criminals, it's always Germans they think of. That is because the Germans seem permanently dangerous to us, while we are only at war with Italy because Mussolini came in on Hitler's side. British policy has always been to support Musso. You couldn't find greater eulogies conferred on any foreign statesman than in two speeches that Chamberlain made about him in the House of Commons. Our upper class didn't turn a hair when his gang were beating up progressives, crushing trade unions and political parties and suppressing all independent thought and life in Italy and drilling Italians into supine stupidity and dosing old women

with castor oil and making war on the Abyssinians. By the way, the *New Statesman* was banned in Italy since 1924. That was because it said that Mussolini murdered Matteotti." "Do you want Mussolini brought to a public trial, then?" "Ah! that raises a very difficult problem. Read the story of the decision to hang the Kaiser. You will find the Cabinet discussion, including a remarkable statement on the subject by Lord Birkenhead, in Lloyd George's *Truth About the Peace Treaties*, Vol. 1. To try him and others like him for their numberless crimes seems at first only right and logical, but it is not easy. In the public mind here he is a figure of fun rather than anything else, and those who tried him would have uneasy memories of having licked his boots for years. And what would be the effect in Italy of the execution of their national leader by a foreign tribunal? The story of such trials is not reassuring. In his biography Winston Churchill quotes a grand remark of his own during the Boer War. He said, 'Grass grows quickly over the battlefield; over the scaffold never.'" "What would you do, then; push him off on a barren island, like Napoleon?" "Perhaps, but far and away the best thing would be to get him bumped off quickly. If he was shot by us during the war that would be no harm, but the right people to kill him are the Italians whom he has fooled and misled into three of the wickedest wars in history. I hope he is killed quickly by Italians."

I well remember seeing Mussolini in January 1938. I had come straight from Barcelona where Fascist armies were completing the foul work that had begun in a plot engineered from Rome. No people ever fought more bravely for their freedom than the Spaniards or were more cruelly betrayed by the democratic Powers. I was feeling pretty bad about it when I got to Rome and saw Mr. Chamberlain step out of the train on to the platform, where the Duce met him. They walked up and down, smiling to the crowd which contained a large contingent of the comfortable British who never left off telling us how nice it is to live in Italy now that the Fascists have made the trains run to time. In the afternoon Chamberlain stood side by side with the Duce and watched little boys doing military exercises in the stadium, and at night there was a great reception where the two paraded for our respectful admiration. When I recall this I feel deep joy at his exit. It means that the tide has turned: when one dictator goes, others shake: when the people get a little liberty they will want more. Ever since the March on Rome reaction has steadily gained ground throughout Europe. Inevitably it cul-

minated in Hitler and this war. The world that is coming will not be very pleasant, but it will be a world in which common people again have hope.



28 AUGUST, 1943

THE following story reached me from an unimpeachable source:

A brass-hat in a first-class carriage, which also held a young man in civilian clothes, made a point of speaking somewhat more loudly than was necessary to his neighbour about young men who ought to be in uniform. The young man bore this in silence until the train was drawing in. Whereupon he spoke these parting words. "I have heard, sir, what you were saying. Let me tell you, sir, that I am in a reserved occupation. Let me add, sir, that the establishment which employs me is the Foreign Office. And let me further add, Sir, that if it hadn't been for the Foreign Office, you would never have had your bloody war."



25 SEPTEMBER, 1943

SHE swayed about in the Underground, shouting anti-Jewish slogans. She was apparently drunk, but drunkenness is so good a cover for the propagandist that I was myself a little suspicious. No one interferes with a "drunk"; no one wants to be "mixed up with anything", and so everyone looks the other way and pretends not to listen. On this occasion only an R.A.F. boy said, not loud enough for anyone but his immediate neighbours to hear, "she ought to be locked up with Mosley". He had the right approach. The present spate of anti-Semitism is deliberately fostered for political ends and the right reply to those who spread it is: "Oh, I did not know you had become a Fascist", or "That I know is what Dr. Goebbels wants us to think." It is very important to understand the political meaning and the deliberate "demoralization" of anti-Semitism; it seems to have been increasingly encouraged since some of the 18B people were released, and part of the propaganda is to suggest that anti-Semitism is a natural development unconnected with Fascism. Of course, there is always plenty that can be innocently said against any other foreign group within one's own country, and some of the

Jews act in a way that gives colour to the propaganda. But the art of propaganda is to exploit the development of an existing sentiment. It is time, I think, for someone in authority to make a public statement on the subject, making it clear that anti-Semitism is part of enemy propaganda. At present it is spread through a number of organs of the press, through publishing companies which do not even scruple to issue editions of such fantastic concoctions as the "protocols of the elders of Zion", and by individuals who begin whispering campaigns in public houses. The phrases used are too uniform and too coincident in time to be a spontaneous expression of public feeling. The oddest document of this character that I have seen recently is a bulletin apparently distributed amongst doctors, issued by a group calling themselves "The Medical Policy Association". Beginning with an attack on the idea of public health service, the document proceeds to the wildest lengths of anti-Semitism, and manages to introduce the "protocols of the elders of Zion" apparently as an argument against the Beveridge Plan!



10 JUNE, 1944

SECRECY has really been admirably preserved. There must have been thousands of people over the week-end who knew. It may be that the long queues of unexcited people, whom a correspondent saw standing in front of fish shops on the South Coast, were so used to the arrival of tanks that they assumed that the unending stream that passed them was no more than another rehearsal. Even the Germans seem to have been foxed about the date. Perhaps they were sure that the weather, which actually postponed operations for twenty-four hours, made them impossible. In any case a commentator on Paris Radio was still suggesting on Tuesday morning that the invasion would be postponed for a month until after Roosevelt had visited England! Note too that on Tuesday morning from 6.30 to 7.30, some hours after landings had begun in France, the mocking voice of Germany's "D-day Broadcast" to our invading army was coming over as usual. Goebbels did not know that the troops to whom these broadcasts have been directed were no longer in England, but on their way to Germany.



10 JUNE, 1944

DURING the first days of the invasion, detailed news cannot be expected, and I have heard no complaints against the Allied authorities on grounds of delay, inaccuracy or excessive secrecy. The newspapers are in a dilemma. The demand for news is universal and urgent, so they fall back on the German radio. The result is very peculiar. Sometimes, no doubt, German admissions tell what Allied Headquarters are not yet ready to claim, but the result of so far depending on the enemy's news service is confusing. An analysis of the papers on Wednesday morning would show some curious results. The papers, of course, say that their unofficial news of landings comes from German sources, but the source appears in small type, and the news in headlines. Take an example from the *Daily Express*. On the front page there is an admirably clear map with arrows showing land, sea and air attacks on Guernsey, Jersey, the bay of St. Malo, and other places not mentioned by the B.B.C. We are told, in italics, that the map is "based on news received from Germany yesterday. From Germany, too, came the news that paratroops had landed in the Channel Islands." So the Germans say, but not, it is to be noted, General Eisenhower.



17 JUNE, 1944

AT Dunkirk we heard a lot about the Providential Weather. A miraculously calm sea made possible the rescue of the British Army. This week, the Allied forces have done wonderfully well in spite of abominable weather. First a day's postponement and, since the invasion, high winds that prevented supplies being landed for twenty-four hours, and low ceilings that handicapped the British and American Air Forces. Now I wish some of those people who were so sure that God performed a miracle on our behalf in 1940 would tell us why we have been so badly treated in 1944. Have we sinned and God turned against us? That would have been the explanation in earlier days. Or has the Devil been in charge this time? The theology of the clergy who talk on these matters is an old curiosity of mine. I recall the preacher in the Crimean war who said that

"God has been sitting on the fence", and prayed Him to come down on our side. Not many years ago a famous divine declared with all solemnity that a hen which had been laying one egg a day began to lay two when the eggs were dedicated to a missionary society, and in the last war the theory was put forward that the bad weather was God's reply to Sunday gardening. What is the orthodox view now? Have we all been producing so much on our Sunday allotments that the wind changed when our armada set sail? Or what? Perhaps the theologians will explain.

9 SEPTEMBER, 1944

SEEN this week on the radiator of an army lorry: "No leave, no babies."

1 JULY, 1944

THE Germans have made things even worse for themselves by shooting fifty British prisoners of war. This was apparently a lapse on the part of the Gestapo, who forgot for the moment that British officers are not as a rule treated as Russians, Poles or Jews. Because these things have not usually been done to the British, we have remained psychologically much less "in the war" than the other peoples of Europe. For years those of us who said that Fascists in Italy and Spain and Germany really tortured and massacred people and were preparing, when they had completed the process of conquering their own country, to do the same thing to foreigners including ourselves, were bitterly attacked as warmongers or pro-Communists or what not. Now that a bit of frightfulness has come our way, the very people who kept repeating that there was "a great deal to be said for the Nazis" are the most thoughtlessly vindictive. The effect should be to toughen our resolve to end this kind of tyranny. The childish reaction is to demand "reprisals". Reprisals are always silly; they waste time and effort that should be concentrated on the job of defeating the enemy and their only other result is to hasten the collapse of civilized behaviour by progression from strategic to indiscriminate bombing, from the bombing of cities to robot or rocket shelling, and on to gas and, ultimately, no doubt, to bacteriological warfare.

30 DECEMBER, 1944

I HEAR that Mr. Churchill's misunderstanding of the Greek Resistance was so complete that, before making his "gang of ruffians" speech, he asked the Greek Government for particulars of the criminal records of the leaders of E.A.M. They could find no criminal records at all, except one sentence of six months for a sexual offence which Ares Veloukhiotis served at the age of twenty. Perhaps it was then that Mr. Churchill's disillusion began. Since then someone has been busy in Athens, and the *Daily Telegraph*'s correspondent, Richard Capell, has been provided with a wonderful document which is said to have been purchased for £102 from E.A.M. It is alleged to be a police record, showing that Ares has committed almost every crime imaginable, culminating in the massacre of 10,000 men. The Athens police, which worked for Metaxas and the Germans, have not learnt caution. They should draw it mild if they want to be believed. I am sure that Richard Capell believed every word he wrote, but I cannot help thinking him a trifle naive. My Greek friends here find the story a joke in somewhat bad taste. They recall incidentally that Ares had a magnificent record of bravery and was highly commended by the British in 1942, when the Gorgopotamos bridge was blown.

30 DECEMBER, 1944

WHERE there are children there is always fun, or should be. Otherwise I thought people less anxious to maintain the convention of jollification than in previous war Christmases. The hope was strong that the main fighting would be over in Europe and the men coming home from the front; the disappointment that the Germans could still stage such a ferocious come-back was cruel, and the thought of the ghastly fighting in Belgium was never out of anyone's mind. Added to that bitterness was the moral bewilderment and, in many cases, sense of shame about Greece. I met it everywhere, in the train and on the road and among a party of soldiers whose lorry broke down outside my door at Christmas midnight and who came in for a drink. A sergeant remarked that ". . . it made one wonder what the war was for". And an airman I picked up on the road said:

"We are all confused about Greece. We know it can't be right that we should be fighting people who have just been fighting the Germans with us."



6 JANUARY, 1945

I SUPPOSE one test of a civilization is the way in which it looks after its food. A friend tells me that, passing a dairy shop near Paddington at about nine-thirty the other morning, he saw unwrapped loaves for the dairy being thrown from a van into a basket on the ground, while the shopkeeper from next door was shaking a large doormat at the kerbside a few yards away and filling the air with the previous day's dust. In London and most of the large towns you are not allowed to shake doormats in the street after 8 a.m. My friend, who happened to know this and felt in the mood to do something about it, asked the man with the doormat if he realized what was happening to the bread. To his great surprise, the man replied that 9.30 was the legal time for shaking doormats, that he was doing his best to comply with the law, and that anyway the bread ought to be wrapped. He betrayed some uncertainty, however, by immediately taking the mat indoors.

Where the 9.30 idea originated I don't know, but the various local Acts that prescribe 8 a.m. as the latest hour for shaking doormats are now a century old; and for some reason they fixed the time as one exception to a general rule prohibiting the shaking or beating of carpets, rugs, or mats in the street at any time. In those days, no doubt, there was a shortage of back-yards; and perhaps it was felt that, as doormats collected dirt coming in from the street, it was only fair that the dirt should go back where it came from.



17 FEBRUARY, 1945

WHAT an odd difference, in one respect, between the Crimea Conference and the gatherings of the wise and great with which we became familiar in the twenties! From Versailles to Genoa, from Rapallo to Washington—wherever the statesmen's circus moved, it was accompanied by a cloud of witnesses from the world's press.

Not so at Yalta. There was, of course, the official photographer. He has perpetuated a remembrance of the Big Three in a picture which I shall cherish—Stalin wearing his Marshal's uniform with the correctness of a Guardee; Roosevelt in a velvet-collared cape, his face and pose curiously reminiscent of Forbes Robertson; and Churchill fantastically attired in Volga astrakhan cap, the British Warm of a Colonel, and the blue trousers (one guesses) of a naval officer. No single journalist, I gather, was allowed to reach the Crimea. Yet the scene merited good reporting. From a conversation with an eyewitness I gather an impression of staggering contrasts. On the one hand, the pomp of Power Politics, brilliantly stage-managed: the exquisite, silvery aircraft with their fighter escorts sliding down from the sky; the patched-up palaces (museums and sanatoria under Soviet rule) alive with grey-uniformed police, and the black coats of the Kremlin Guards; the Big Three, each with a potentate's retinue; magnificent food—all flown daily from Moscow. And, in the hinterland, nothing but desolation. Sebastopol, an uninhabited ruin, *ausgeschossen*; the countryside, seen from the windows of a car, devastated and largely unpeopled by deportations and (it would appear) some "liquidation" of Tartar collaborators when the Red Army returned. Anyway, an effective reminder to the Big Three that it is against this background of destruction and misery of common people everywhere that the peace must be framed.



31 MARCH, 1945

STORIES will be told of Lloyd George as long as people continue to be interested in British history. There were so many L.G.s; we can all pick and choose between them. In my boyhood memory he is the scourge of the landlord and peer, later he became the victorious L.G. I disliked and distrusted at the end of the last war. He is L.G. the orator of the grand occasion and, much more remarkable, the M.P. who could get up in a ragged House and talk so intimately that every Member felt the words were being addressed to him personally. Then I recall L.G.'s various and futile efforts to stage a come-back; a conversation at Churt after he had thrown a fat fly on the political waters, and his answer to my query whether the Conservative Party could not profit by it. "Do you see any green in my

eye?" he asked. Then there was the deeply troubled L.G. seeking an alternative to the war, and the dramatic figure, with white hair and black cloak streaming in the wind, who so proudly displayed a record crop of Cox's Orange Pippins. I have left out the L.G. who, with a wealth of mimicry, analysed the principal orators of his time, and decided (this was before 1940) that while we sat back as an audience and applauded the brilliance of Winston Churchill, "the man for a common jury" was the simple and persuasive Stanley Baldwin. One story that I hope to see somebody print in full occurred in the darkest hour of March 1918. Some members of the Cabinet were near despair. When they arrived L.G. was singing a Welsh hymn about the valley of the shadow and Smuts, also a religious man of peasant stock, was singing with him. L.G.'s short speech on that occasion reinvigorated and united the Cabinet and received, by request of his colleagues, the unique tribute of being recorded in the Cabinet minutes.

Part of L.G.'s charm (which worked even with his enemies) depended on his voice. Partly it was due to his lightning quickness of perception—what Keynes called his "sixth sense". One of my favourite stories of his quickness in action concerns the visit of Mr. De Valera to negotiate terms with Britain. De Valera arrived with an "ambassador", describing himself as President of the Irish Republic. L.G., who was accompanied by Tom Jones, his compatriot and Secretary of the Cabinet, brushed aside the ambassador and welcomed "Mr. De Valera". The latter produced a scroll written in Irish, headed, "Saorstat". "These," said Mr. De Valera, "are the terms that the Irish Republic offers to Britain, and for convenience, I have here the English translation." But L.G. would only examine the scroll. "What," he said, "Mr. De Valera, does the heading mean?" "Free State," said De Valera. "What then is the Irish for Republic?" asked L.G. Mr. De Valera turned to consult his ambassador on this linguistic point. While the Irishman talked in English, Lloyd George turned to Tom Jones and in the living language of Welsh, said, "That's flummoxed him!" De Valera finally reported that the Irish for "Republic" would be "Saorstat". "Just so," said Lloyd George. "We Celts never have been republicans, have we?" And with the main point already scored, the ambassador was ushered out of the room, and the Prime Minister of England was able to discuss the future of Ireland, not with the President of the Irish Republic, but with Mr. De Valera.

7 APRIL, 1945

V-DAY, with its two Bank Holidays, will not be at all like Armistice Day, 1918. For one thing, very few people then had been expecting the war to end; one just couldn't believe it. It must have been on November 10th that I first heard that the Germans were suing for peace. I was in France, a very young man wearing a Red Cross (F.A.U.) uniform, and it happened that I started home on leave that day. I was in London on the 12th, and the celebrations resembled nothing that I have seen or heard of since. London was just carnival; not drunk with beer (I think the liquor soon gave out), but quite drunk with happiness. I remember best Trafalgar Square, where thousands of people were dancing on the pavements, singing, idiotically, "Oh, Oh, What a Rotten World!" and linking up and merry-making with other groups of people they had never met before and would never see again. A policeman, who was thought slightly officious, found himself surrounded by a cheery mob which joined hands and danced round him singing, "Ring-a-ring o' Roses". They took off his helmet and played catch with it. They boarded buses and made the drivers go anywhere that took their fancy. This time, I fancy, there will be more drink and hooliganism, and less spontaneous happiness. The Day will be "staged" and has been too long expected. And then, apart from the Burma-Looms-Ahead quip, everyone knows that the war won't be properly over even in Europe (they discuss "pockets of resistance" in the pub, and they know that demobilization will take a long time and that things will be "very difficult after the war"). The more thoughtful people ask what victory means if the other side haven't surrendered, and argue about the food situation and what is coming of all this talk about a new World Organization. But these are longer-distance thoughts. When V-Day does come, it will be a day of a wonderful release from tension. The killing in Europe will be over, or nearly over, and that, to millions of mothers and sweethearts and friends, is the supreme thing. It will mean the end of rockets, and no more blackout; most important of all, it will mean family reunions and a rest and a holiday. Not, as many thought last time, the assurance of a better epoch or anything of that kind, but a holiday, perhaps with those we love. In the world's present mood what could be better than that?

7 JULY, 1945

A CORRESPONDENT who thinks that Buchenwald cannot really have been worse than a prison camp in India writes to protest against what he assumed to be impossible and ludicrous exaggerations in Mr. Crossman's article in this journal a fortnight ago. How is one to begin to get over the realities of Nazidom to such naive and kindly British souls? They are, of course, quite right in emphasizing that there is nothing "different" in German human nature and that the cruelties that have been practised in Germany could occur in almost any country in certain circumstances. But, except during the late Roman Empire, I know no parallel to the *madness* of Nazi cruelty. I myself have questioned an American officer who had spent weeks on the spot making a full report on Buchenwald. One grotesque detail he gave which was not in Mr. Crossman's article. There is within sight of a large part of the Buchenwald camp a large garden. One of the punishments given was so many hours' work in the garden, within sight of the inmates of the camp, who were often drawn up to witness punishments. The peculiarity of this punishment was that the victim had to do some pleasant-sounding job like planting flowers or moving earth in a wheelbarrow, but to do it at a fast run with an S.S. man flogging him with a whip every time he stumbled. Many men have died within sight of their comrades while planting flowers. Perhaps this story will begin to convey the truth to my correspondent and other sceptics. In every country there are people who have sadistic imaginations. In normal societies, no one except perhaps a psychoanalyst knows about their fantasies; where a pervert tries to translate them into action he usually ends up in a criminal lunatic asylum. The difference in Nazi Germany is that people with such imaginations were deliberately chosen to run prison camps; delighting to wring the last drop of suffering, and, from their point of view, humour, out of the contrast between flowers and death, out of the juxtaposition of the cinema, the brothel, the whipping-block, and the gallows, they were given absolute power over many thousands of human beings.

14 JULY, 1945

A YEAR ago, when Paris was celebrating the first July 14th of a new liberation, a Frenchman, who knows this country well, said to me: "You English will not begin by storming a Bastille; you will begin by establishing 'squatters' rights' in unoccupied basements." Today my friend might claim that his prediction is being fulfilled by the activities of the Brighton Vigilantes, who are commandeering empty premises and installing in them the homeless or "inadequately housed" families of Service men. This movement, I see, is starting also in London districts and will certainly spread in default of vigorous official action. The Vigilantes' motives are doubtless excellent, and, in so far as they aim simply at shaking up an apparently complacent Ministry of Health, I wish them well; when houses are empty and hundreds of "displaced persons" have nowhere to live, drastic means are justified. The "Englishman's Castle" doctrine cannot be applied with any moral force to homes which are unoccupied. But there are serious objections to the growth of irregular commandeering by groups of individuals. Such a movement could only too easily degenerate into a gangsters' racket, or be exploited by political enemies of democracy. But irregular action may help to galvanize Ministries and local authorities into immediate action.

21 JULY, 1945

THE lighted streets have given London a carnival atmosphere this week and even in the daily press, with the horrific "pre-invasion bombing" of Japan as its main item, there are signs of peace. Detective stories, cricket matches, murder reports and prize-fights remind us that, when the shooting is over, man still needs his normal alternatives to war.

28 JULY, 1945

WALKING down a London street last week, I saw three men pushing a barrow laden with furniture. They stopped outside an empty house. Vigilantes? I wondered. One of them put his hand through

a broken pane of glass and opened the door while the others hurriedly carried a bed and chairs inside. I challenged them. No, they were just helping a friend to move house. I said I was neither detective nor bailiff. "Are you a journalist?" said one. "You'd better come in." They would say very little about themselves except that they had come up from Brighton to do this job. Would I be interested in forming a local Vigilante Committee? They could put me in touch with Mr. Cowley, the "Guv'nor". No, they didn't mind what a man's politics were, but they wouldn't have any truck with Fascists who wanted to use their movement for their own ends. They were workers and they were doing what they could to help the wives and families of workers who were in the army. All the time they were talking to me they were busy sweeping up the place, repairing broken windows and generally making the house habitable. Yes, they hoped their movement would grow. Recruits and funds were coming in from all over the country. They didn't want to break any laws. They told the people they helped to offer the proper rent when the landlord came round. It was worth the time and trouble. It needed something like this to shake up the Government. I am not sure how far the new Ministry of Health circular will put an end to the Vigilantes' activity. It depends how much the local authorities choose to use their powers.

28 JULY, 1945

As I watched the first three hundred results come off the tape, with over one hundred Labour gains and a massacre of Tory Ministers—Grigg, Bracken, Amery, Sandys, Belisha, Macmillan, Somervell, Womersley, Law and Mabane all out—my first two thoughts were whether the rural seats would show an equally big Labour swing and, if so, whether "Gauleiter" Ralph Assheton (now "outside" the House) would allow Mr. Churchill to return to Potsdam in the capacity of a Counsellor to Mr. Attlee, or whether the Primrose League would insist on his status being strictly that of "Observer". Time's revenges for electoral stunts always come, but not often so quickly. But Lord Beaverbrook never has understood the British public.

4 AUGUST, 1945

THERE is little disposition to say "I told you so" about the results of the election. No one told anybody how many seats Labour would get because, while it was certain that Labour would poll very heavily, there was no basis on which to make an estimate of the distribution of the votes. One of the best-informed Transport House organizers exactly reproduced my state of mind when he said that Labour would come back with something between 220 and 400 seats! The only certainties, in short, were the recapture of many industrial areas and a swing of rural votes—but whether enough swing in the right seats I could not guess. I kept recalling that Mr. Roosevelt's total majority of votes over Mr. Landon was small, but that he won 42 out of 48 states. The Gallup Poll, as Mr. Durant reminded us in Monday's *News Chronicle*, was remarkably accurate in estimating the voting. It was little more than 1 per cent wrong in forecasting Labour's 48·8 per cent, the Tory 39·4 per cent, and the Liberal 9·2 per cent, and it was even more prophetic about the splinter parties. Perhaps the 1 per cent error was due to Mr. Churchill's broadcasts or Lord Beaverbrook's electoral stunts? Anyway, my point is that, even if we had trusted this remarkably accurate Gallup Poll, we should not have known the distribution of seats.

4 AUGUST, 1945

"I FEEL that the country has been shockingly ungrateful to Mr. Churchill," said a friend to me during the week-end. In fact, such ingratitude is a proof of political maturity; it means that the electorate no longer confuses the man with the policy, the national hero of the war with the post-war party leader. We are all grateful to Mr. Churchill; I'd make him a Duke. Nor has Labour shown any lack of generosity. I never expected to see coals of fire more appropriately heaped than in Attlee's offer to Churchill to accompany him to Potsdam, or in the tumultuous applause which the great Labour audience at Central Hall awarded to Mr. Laski's warm words of gratitude to Churchill for his unparalleled services to the nation during the war.

11 AUGUST, 1945

"FOR once," said my friend who understands atoms and such like, "for once the press cannot be too sensational. This is the biggest discovery ever made. The principal, once established, can be so applied that almost everything else becomes out of date." Does it mean, I asked him, that small Powers which can't afford gigantic plants needing 100,000 men to run them, can use atomic energy? He explained that the necessary resources for production cannot be found in any existing countries except the U.S., the U.S.S.R. and the British Commonwealth, but that the time will come when these Great Powers can, if they will, sell the stuff by the pound, so to speak, to other countries which can use it for power stations, and substitute it for coal or indeed for any form of energy. Though it will remain extremely expensive to produce, the cost to the nation that buys it will not be high for what it can achieve, because the quantity needed to produce an immense amount of power will be so very small. I asked my friend for examples of the peacetime objects that could be achieved. He replied that it would now be practicable to make plans for visiting the moon and indeed touring the universe and that no doubt such ancient fantasies would in time be everyday events. But in the near future it would be more useful to develop vast desert areas—the Arctic, the Sahara, the sterile spaces of Australia. Waste land is waste mainly because of the absence of water; there is now nowhere where it will not be possible to reach deep-lying water. This should end the problem of Indian and Asiatic poverty. "Indeed," he said, "most of the economic problems we discuss look pretty silly now."

11 AUGUST, 1945

LIKE many other people, I knew that there had been a danger of the Germans being the first to get the atomic bomb, and that it was going ahead in the United States. But that it was ready for use was a very well-kept secret. Novelists and playwriters have been writing for years about the moral problem that would confront the inventor or the nation which possesses such a secret weapon. The most pro-

phetic was undoubtedly Harold Nicolson's *Public Faces*. (I wish the kind fellow who borrowed my copy would return it.) This is an extremely witty book, in which the atomic bomb is discovered after the creation of a Labour Government, which includes Bevan and Greenwood, and the fall of a Conservative Government, which contained Winston Churchill and Brendan Bracken. Surely a most remarkable prophecy. The moral of this book, as with all the others, is that world unity is the unavoidable alternative to world destruction. In the Wells fantasy, *The World Set Free*, the crumbling of atoms, once started, cannot be stopped, and our cities fall into holes in the earth. Listening to scientists the last few days, it has seemed to me that quite a small mistake in the job of breaking up the atom might start a process which would go on until this world had become a sun. But I see that this is officially regarded as unlikely. One possible idea is to achieve World Unity by organizing a world war against Mars.



11 AUGUST, 1945

THE B.B.C. announcers have all adopted a tone of solemn jubilation in reading the news of the atomic bomb's success in "vaporizing" a Japanese town with a population of 300,000 men, women and children. I very much doubt whether this chimes with the mood of the public. Obviously, we are all relieved that the Germans didn't drop it on London, but apart from that, everyone I've met was plunged into gloom by the news of the invention. While we are told officially of "excellent results", I find everywhere an increasing moral revulsion. In 1940 we denounced the Nazis because they started indiscriminate bombing, and justified our own bombing on the score that we did not begin the dirty business. Today there can be no shadow of doubt that we have begun a new and far more indiscriminate type of warfare. The fact is, of course, that official indignation at the use of new weapons and techniques has been pure hypocrisy throughout this war. It was not morality which restrained us or the Germans from the use of gas or of bacteriological warfare, but the simple fact that they were boomerang weapons. If we had had a thousand Lancasters in 1939 we should probably have Coventrated Berlin before the Germans invented the word. In fact, we had only the prototype of the Lancaster, and the Germans started

strategic bombing first. We denounced the immorality of it, while we busily caught up with the Germans and carried strategic bombing one stage further. Then the Germans in their turn became morally indignant and constructed V1 and V2. Caught unawares by this new technique, we denounced German terrorism and perfected the atomic bomb. And so it goes on.

11 AUGUST, 1945

THE strongest reaction I have come across against the "obliteration" of Hiroshima was from an Indian friend who is, I believe, in this matter typical of his countrymen. They still look at political action from a moral point of view, and sometimes recall that the British used to share this characteristic. To them the obliteration of a civilian population (who, as they see, certainly had less responsibility for the war than the citizens of a western democracy with some control of their government) is a moral outrage, made worse by the fact that the Anglo-American ultimatum to Japan made no mention of this new weapon. I believe that the effect will be similar throughout Asia; the Chinese have never agreed with the Americans about the subhuman Japanese and the tendency in Asia is increasingly hostile to White mechanized domination. I know that all such moral and psychological factors will seem only sentimental to the High Command in the Pacific, but I am sufficiently old-fashioned myself to believe that the principles for which we say we were fighting were based on a long experience of human relations, and that to act as if the people of any country were vermin, outside the scope of moral obligation, is to begin the disintegration of our own society.

11 AUGUST, 1945

NO nation can claim exclusive credit for the discovery of the atomic bomb. It is perhaps fair to claim Chadwick as the inventor of the first step. Others who have played a vital part are Fermi, an Italian, Joliot, a Frenchman, and, ironically, Yukawa, a Japanese physicist; then of course a number of great English and American physicists and engineers. But in the later stages much important work was

done by the Danish anti-Fascist scientist, Bohr, and two German-Jewish refugees who escaped from Hitler. Hitler might have won the war if he had not persecuted the Jews.



18 AUGUST, 1945

THEY have been draining one of the artificial lakes (emergency tanks) in a bombed site near this office. Spectators were interested in what would be found at the bottom. Apart from a lot of green stuff and sludge, a trilby, and various pieces of old iron including the lid of a dustbin, there were two sizeable roach. Everyone was asking how they got there. At last a common-sense voice said that somebody must have put them there. But why? Further discussion, and then the common-sense voice again, "So that people would ask how they got there!"

18 AUGUST, 1945

IRONY could scarcely go further than the coincidence between the obliteration of Japanese towns and the decision of the War Crimes Commission that the wanton destruction of towns and civilian populations is a war crime. The Germans after all could always claim military necessity and the saving of the lives of soldiers just as we do. Some of my correspondents want to know whether the Allied leaders are to be in the dock with Göring and Frank. In fact, the War Crimes Report is a most sensible document and its categories of crime are the right ones. I am particularly glad that the list includes the crime of deliberately planning war, which, I believe, can be proved against the leading Nazis. It is a great step, because it recognizes that all war now is civil war, and that there can be no sovereign acts above the law of nations. Mr. Jackson, who has been mainly responsible on the American side for negotiating agreement on war crimes, has done a magnificent job, which is full of good augury for the future. He has shown that one man, unimpeded by the Foreign Office or State Department, can by patience, goodwill and determination break through Soviet suspicion. His job was to find a solution for the conflict between Western and Russian ideas of judicial administration. Russians have genuinely believed that the

right judicial method is by way of private examination followed by public confession and denunciation. They have been persuaded that this method would not convince the western world, which believes that all the stages of justice must be public. As a result, one of the likely causes of friction between Russia and the West should have disappeared, and the trials will be a joint affair carried out by genuinely international courts in accordance with agreed legal principles.



13 OCTOBER, 1945

FROM the judicial point of view, the Belsen Trial is being admirably conducted and the defence is being given all the latitude of a legal system designed at all costs to prevent an innocent man from being condemned. As a result, the proceedings are likely to become inordinately long and any hope that they will bring home to the Germans the horrors of the concentration camps seems likely to be frustrated. A friend of mine spent a day recently in the gallery reserved for Germans. In the morning it was packed; in the afternoon interest had waned and it was half-empty. He noticed that the German spectators were not in the least impressed by the fairness of British justice, which permitted, for instance, defending counsel to cross-examine with great severity the prosecution witnesses. Since they assumed that the defendants would anyway be found guilty—"what else is a judge for?" one respectable shopkeeper asked—they thought the whole performance an elaborate propaganda trick and very dull at that. Nor were they any more interested by the appalling revelations made by the witnesses. Their attitude seemed to be, "why all this bother about a regrettable incident which is dead and done with?" This indifference, my friend observed, is the chief problem of German re-education. What matters for the future, said my friend, is the complete absence, even in many "good" Germans, of what we regard as the normal moral emotions.

This diagnosis is confirmed by another observer who has extensive experience of interrogating Wehrmacht officers. He talked recently to an exceptionally able young man, a university student; and asked him, casually, what he and his friends used to talk about in the evenings at the university. The young man thought for a moment and replied: "Feelings. We try them." My friend thought he had

misheard and repeated the question. The young man explained that his generation could not awaken their emotions any more. Every experience was flat, and they would discuss for hours how to arrange experiences which might stimulate again their love, pity, hate or indignation. "But it never works," he ended. "We Germans can't feel any more." No doubt this particular officer was unusually self-conscious, but I am certain that he put his finger on the real disease of the German mind—indifference, or, to use the German word which says it so much better, *Gleichgueltigkeit*. . . .



20 OCTOBER, 1945

WAS it necessary to revive Laval for the firing squad? This ending was the final macabre touch in a trial in which prosecutors and judges cut as ignoble a figure as the sordid personality of the accused. There is no room in the world for Laval and his like; but the proceedings were a travesty of the democratic justice they professed to mete out. One is left with the impression that it was never intended to give Laval a chance to develop his defence. It might have implicated too many others.

1946—1956

11 MAY, 1946

I SUPPOSE only a minute percentage of those present at the Keynes Memorial Service in Westminster Abbey actually accepted in any simple sense the doctrines and beliefs embodied in the words of the hymns and prayers in which they joined. Certainly Keynes, a staunch rationalist, would not have done so. And yet none of us would have been willing to forgo the service or felt inclined to criticize the words. They were singularly well chosen. They were all familiar. And it was because they were familiar that they meant much, so much more than their superficial content. Rationalism has argued the Church out of existence, yet not dethroned it, mainly, I think, because, although men no longer believe in the Judaic God, whom they evoke, they do demand on the great occasions of life—birth, marriage, death and festival—a ceremony to satisfy their emotions and to celebrate the occasion in community. Tradition cannot be invented, nor can consciously devised ceremonial take the place of words whose associations are so much more important than their surface meanings. Witness the pathetic efforts of Positivism to substitute intelligent hero worship for the traditional mythology of Christianity. Take the items at the Keynes Memorial Service. "The King of Love my Shepherd is . . ." What astonishing assumptions that hymn implies and yet imagine trying to write one that would say as much even to people who do not believe in one of them! And the same may be said for the Psalm, "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?", for the hymn, "O God, our help in ages past", and for the apt and lovely collect, "O God, the physician of men and nations, the restorer of the years that have been destroyed . . ." There are fewer reservations to make about "Let us now praise famous men", about Walford Davies's exquisite anthem, "God be in my head", or about Blake's "Jerusalem". A memorial to Keynes could not end better than with the words "I will not cease from mental fight . . ."

25 MAY, 1946

A FRIEND recently doing an official job in the Russian Zone of Germany reports to me a typical and revealing incident. He was with a couple of British soldiers when an elderly German asked them for bread. The Russian soldier from Uzbekistan waved the man away with his rifle. When the man refused to go he hit him in the stomach with the butt end. The British soldiers were angry and wanted to intervene. The Russian went off; the British took the old man away and gave him a meal. My friend took the matter up with Russian officers in the evening. As usual, they were intelligent, highly educated and reasonable men. They agreed that such behaviour by Russian soldiers was discreditable to the Soviet Union. And then they added this explanation: Six million Russian soldiers had been killed in the war; most of them "Western Russians", with whose blood, they said, the soil of Eastern Europe and the Ukraine was drenched. The occupying troops came from Central Asia and had not had the chance of acquiring the habits of British gentlemen. "If the British had lost anything like the proportion of their army that we have lost of ours," they said, "Germany would now be occupied by coloured levies. And they would not behave like British gentlemen either."

27 JULY, 1946

THE sad news of Jimmy Maxton's death comes too late this week for me to write more than a few lines about a singularly lovable man. He had been ill and had taken comparatively little part in British politics for some years. But there was a time when he was the best orator in England. He made a rule never to dine with the rich; he would not be corrupted by the "aristocratic embrace". So the Tories tried to kill his influence by making a pet of him, which was easy, because he was an excellent Parliamentarian and popular with everyone. When it was known that he would speak, the House was crowded and hushed. He would open quietly, and then the words would pour out in a dazzling fountain. From time to time Maxton would push his pirate lock from his forehead. At the end of his

peroration, which always contained a murderous denunciation of the upper classes, everyone would applaud vigorously, and go out to look for their cars, saying to one another, "What an idealist! How sincere he is!" If, instead of praising his performance, they had taken him seriously, they would have cut their throats.

7 SEPTEMBER, 1946

RAIL transport is so short in the British Zones of Germany and Austria that no room can be found on the trains for the few hundred survivors of the concentration camps who wish to join their relatives in England under the Home Secretary's scheme. At least this is the official reason given for turning requests down. I was therefore interested to read in a *Times* dispatch last Monday describing the arrival of the first wives and children of men serving in Germany the following quotation from a fourteen-page booklet which was distributed. "In all trains, cigarettes, sweets and magazines will be provided. The size of the trains has been so calculated that everyone should have a corner seat. There is wine to be bought during meals." This was printed under the headline, "BAOR Families in Germany. A British Example." These empty middle seats—deliberately kept empty slightly to increase the luxury of travel—are a British example of exactly what? Arrogance? No. Just lack of political imagination. We often turn up our noses at the methods used by the French in running their Zone. They strip it of food and of the product of its factories, but at least they don't go in for this sort of thing. A friend of mine who returned from Mainz the other day says that instead of evicting the Germans from their houses and making them leave their furniture behind as the British do, the French make their officers and families share houses with the German occupier. Social contact—perhaps too much of it—is thereby encouraged. I have realized that few British families could stand this French method. But could not the authorities responsible avoid this indecent habit of running into extremes? Just as the choice is not between keeping German prisoners here indefinitely and sending them back just when we need them for the harvest, so the choice is not between refusing to send families to Germany and sending them like Sahibs to Poona. Is it really necessary just before the cold

weather sets in to evict thousands of German families from the single rooms in which they live to provide three-bedroom flats for officers' wives? I am sure that many of those wives if they are permitted to realize what suffering their comfort has caused will be the first to protest.



19 OCTOBER, 1946

THE whole Nuremberg business has been a ghastly mess. At the end of the war I thought drum-head court martial the best way of getting rid of Göring, Streicher and other obvious war criminals and sadists. After that, "denazification", but an end to "trials". Then came the grand idea of building up the concept of international law by making it a crime to plan warfare. Unfortunately, the trial based on that idea has every day looked more hypocritical while the victors were themselves making atom bombs and jockeying for strategic advantages against each other. The judges and advocates have done their best to keep the hearing on a civilized and legal plane, but the last scrap of dignity has been snatched from the proceedings by the loathsome reporting of the executions. Why make a sensation of Göring's suicide? It would have been better, far better, if they had all been given the chance to take cyanide. It would have at least spared us the degradation of these apparently protracted deaths by slow strangulation, described with disgusting detail. Another blunder was to publicize the heroic "last words" by guilty men who will only too easily figure as heroes in the minds of many Germans.



23 AUGUST, 1947

To see the Indian flag hoisted at Aldwych was a wonderful cure for cynicism. Few aspirations for the good have succeeded in our time, and we are so accustomed to worthy defeats and barren victories that a victory that fulfils a worthy aspiration deserves all the emphasis we can give it. Mr. Alexander, who spoke for Britain during the ceremony, naturally stressed the achievement of the present British Government in India and recalled that Indian freedom was a fulfilment of a British promise. Surely he should also have recalled that

Britain has been induced to keep that promise at least in part by the work of many devoted individuals, both in England and India. We should not forget that this is a victory for the idealists, for Gandhi and Nehru and countless others who suffered for their persistence with long periods in stifling gaols. Nor should we allow this occasion to pass without recalling the work of such men as C. F. Andrews, Edward Thompson, and Geoffrey Garratt. Among those who are still alive and working for and with India I think especially of Mr. Sorensen, often known as the Member for India, the death of whose son in a Chinese aeroplane seems unhappily to be this week confirmed. Among many others this Indian Independence Day must have brought special pleasure to Horace Alexander, Carl Heath, Agatha Harrison, Stanley Reed and H. N. Brailsford. It would be easy to add to the list of those who have given the lie to the thesis that economic interest is alone of importance in political life. It is true that an Indian settlement was more easily reached because Congress had become afraid of the Left in India, because Britain, weakened by the war, was willing, through the work of Mr. Attlee, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Mountbatten, to concede what strength will seldom concede. But in shedding an imperialist outlook, as in other things, there is always the difference between the wise and the foolish way, and if on this occasion wisdom has won, that is due to the fact that in Great Britain and India alike there have throughout been people who were determined not to allow personal relations to grow sour or national arrangements to become merely a work of power.



8 NOVEMBER, 1947

DR. JOHNSON was even more wrong than usual when he said that no man ever loses a night's sleep by worrying over public affairs. But it is, I think, true that no man kills himself only because the world looks like going to hell. In the case of John Winant, it is clear that his irresistibly attractive diffidence was the sign of a deep conflict of nature which periodically plunged him into moods of suicidal depression. These, of course, would be intensified when all the things he minded about in the world seemed to be going wrong, and his own chance of working for them effectively seemed to be diminishing. The climate of present American politics must have deeply

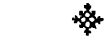
affected him. The United Nations for which he desired to work was obviously a farce, and the State Department would not support him on the Social and Economic Council. He could have had no interest in the party struggle, and he was too sensitive and intelligent not to understand the significance of the present drift towards 500 per cent Americanism. He was the most remarkable Ambassador whom America has ever sent abroad. I remember my astonishment when I first met him at a dinner just after he had arrived in England. In conversation he admitted that he had no interest in the usual social contacts of an Ambassador, but that there were people in England he very much wanted to meet. He shyly named two particularly, Professor Tawney and the Master of Balliol. This was indeed a surprising Ambassador. I arranged a lunch with Tawney, and after that Winant used to come to small parties for people who would certainly not normally be on any Foreign Office list. On such occasions his shyness would wear off, and I have known him sit after lunch talking until four o'clock, while urgent telephone messages piled up from the Embassy. He worked harder at his job than any Ambassador on record; cut out all the frills, spent no time or energy on entertaining at the Embassy, made close friendships with Labour as well as with Conservative Ministers, and was always ready to see people of any social sphere if seeing them would forward the joint interests of the people of Britain and America. He believed sincerely, one might almost say naïvely, in the "common man", and when he spoke in public, which he did with the utmost difficulty, he conveyed a winning impression of businesslike resolution, personal humility and reserves of power. His death removes one of the small body of men on whom one had relied to begin to pull us out of our present morass.



22 NOVEMBER, 1947

How I envy those Fleet Street experts on an occasion like the Royal Wedding! How skilfully they make a column out of a silk frock and a headline out of a smile! They can be lyrical about the wedding gifts, the dazzling gold and silver, the diamonds, the pictures of the stag at bay and the good books bound in full morocco. They could perhaps have made more than they did of the old-world glamour of Charing Cross village on Wednesday night; it was something like a

celebration to see crowds collecting at midnight, hawkers selling paper hats and all the fun of the fair, and gay parties interrupting all-night revels to drink coffee at street-corner stalls. I know that I ought to make tactful references to the first great Elizabeth of England, to recall memories of the wedding of Victoria and Albert and to comment on the constitutional importance of the occasion. But as Elizabeth and Philip are young and in love, I shall content myself with wishing them, and all other true lovers, every success and happiness in their marriage.



20 DECEMBER, 1947

Of course, there is no solution for a situation which must end in One World—or no world. The latter seems more likely. I well recall the cold feeling in the pit of my stomach when one night in August 1945 I heard on the wireless that an atom bomb had been dropped over Hiroshima. I knew just enough to understand what it meant. That ghastly slaughter of 80,000 people was not of special importance; more were killed in a single mass aircraft raid on Tokio. But so far in human history (with the famous exception of the Chinese when they discovered gunpowder) men have never acquired destructive knowledge without developing and using it. Today we are told that atom bombs are being made many times as powerful as the token affairs dropped on Japan, and that an atomic war would have the effect of releasing so much radioactivity that little of the human race would survive. The experts add that bacteriological warfare would be even more effective, since it would end plant and animal life and reduce the earth to a single Sahara desert. Bertrand Russell, who has the courage to be outspoken on this matter, wants to get to One World by uniting the comparatively "good" nations and then compelling the others to come into a world federation by threatening them with atom bombs. A logical solution, the difficulty of which is that the Soviet half of the world (which is to be compelled on Lord Russell's recipe) thinks itself the good half, and believes its economic and social system has survival value while the capitalist half will collapse by its own internal contradictions. Russia is the one country that really believes in One World—and is prepared to go through with war and revolution to get the kind of One World she postulates. As I see no way out of this dilemma, I'd

like to see a sphere-of-interest agreement. The two systems would then compete. I would not be confident that war would be permanently avoided, but the rulers of both halves of the world might hesitate to begin a war which, for the first time in history, would certainly end in mutual and probably final destruction. As the Communist Manifesto of 1848 reminds us, the end of class-war—the "last fight" of which Communists sing—might be not the victory of the oppressed over the oppressors but the "total destruction of the contending classes". This passage may not be forgotten in Moscow.



13 MARCH, 1948

JAN MASARYK'S suicide is a terrible and significant tragedy. By nature and upbringing he was a Western democrat, and it is very possible that he felt that he could have done more to resist Communist pressure, and blamed himself for not doing so. He would have been very sensitive indeed to criticisms in some English newspapers, which suggested that in accepting the Communist *coup* he had been disloyal to his father's memory. The son of a very great father begins life with an impossible handicap. Jan was an able man who would have been a brilliant success in many walks of life. But, as he once confessed to me, he was always unable to escape from playing parts which were expected of his father's son. He created for himself a gay, jocular, almost cynical, exterior. He was always laughing at himself and so got the reputation of a playboy. He was an admirable speaker, and the most witty of conversationalists. He could have been, I should say, a first-class actor. I recall a speech he made at a lunch given in honour of his friend Karel Capek. It was a masterpiece of artistry; the cleverest mixture of the humorous and the tragic. When I visited him in the Czernin Palace last summer, he began by telling me how much he was embarrassed by a mansion where he was sometimes compelled to entertain several hundred guests. He laughingly described the horrors of such entertainment, and after dinner took me into the room where he did his work and spent his life. It was small, with a bed and a telephone in one corner, a writing-table and some books opposite. What particular misery led him to throw himself from the window we may or may not learn. But the conflict in his mind is easy enough to

understand. It is inescapable for all those who have been brought up to love liberty and who find themselves poised between Communism and reaction. In his case the conflict was increased by his passionate loyalty to his country, and by his steady preference for the Russians to the Germans, whom, like all Czechs, he believed to be the real menace to his country. But he could never have been anybody's stooge, and like many other Czech Liberals and Socialists today, he must have realized with bitter intensity that to go with the Communists meant to be absorbed in a system from which individual ethics and freedom have been purged and in which all questions of personal relations, which mattered supremely to him, are subordinated to a single fanaticism.



3 APRIL, 1948

THE I.L.P., long a shadow, has ceased to pretend to exist. Its work has long been done; it has bred great men from Keir Hardie downwards. It was more than any other body the real parent of the Labour Party, though some of its leaders, like MacDonald and Snowden, left it for the Labour Party and then betrayed both the parties they had led. It gathered to its ranks many thoughtful workers and much of the Socialist intelligentsia; it represented the heart of the Labour movement, just as the Fabian Society represented its head. But the body of the movement was its trade union membership which was influenced by, but never controlled by, either the I.L.P. or the Fabians. The I.L.P. suffered from sentimentality. A political party must be based on a desire for power. Its tactics must flow from a realistic analysis of the way to achieve power. As a vehicle of propaganda the I.L.P. has been extremely successful. It voiced the moral revolt against capitalism and imperialism; its Socialism and its social programme have been gradually accepted by the Labour Party. But many I.L.P.-ers made the mistake of thinking that moral revolt and social aspirations were enough to make a political party and they got into the habit of feeling that as far as they were concerned the job was done once their consciences were clear. They could never stomach the compromises involved in power. They were always denouncing "power politics" without realizing that the art of politics is the right use of power.

Back from Delhi 26 JUNE, 1948

SOME former Viceroys of India may have been more profound thinkers or abler administrators than Mountbatten. But none of them, with the possible exception of one or two of the Company's early officers, could have carried off so triumphantly the task of being the last British Viceroy and Governor-General. That he was the last no doubt gained him some popularity; but it is only a small part of the explanation for the crowds that followed him, or his wife, wherever they went, and for the obviously genuine affection, almost love, in the farewell speeches of the Indian leaders. The decision he was obliged to make on Partition would have been quite sufficient to blight the remainder of the stay of any other Viceroy. I would put first among the qualities that have made him so successful his sincere and sustained enthusiasm. It is rare for politicians and administrators to be passionately interested, and disinterested, in their jobs, and at the same time to appear to be so. Mountbatten is, and convinces everyone else that he is. When he asks for advice, he wants it, and intends to use it—he is not just flattering by an attentive smile while really thinking about something else. His military training has taught him the importance of "timing"; he is fertile with proposals and expects his staff to tear them to shreds, until one emerges that stands up to the most ruthless criticism. Next in importance is his conventional unconventionality. His Royal background and complete acceptance of the forms of English (and Indian) society have enabled him easily to sweep away barriers, usually regarded as sacrosanct. How could Indian Princes stand up against so superbly dressed a prince who told them to give in to democracy? How could bourgeois-minded officials represent to him that British etiquette in India required Viceroys not to give parties at the Viceroy's house to Indian pressmen, and not to squat on the ground amongst the mourners at Gandhi's funeral? But the Mountbattens were a team, and Lady Mountbatten helped refugees in the Punjab not because she thought she ought to, but because she wanted to. As quick and intelligently sympathetic as her husband, it was not difficult for Indians to see that she, like the Governor-General, enjoyed being alive and believed it was the right of everyone else to enjoy it, too.

10 JULY, 1948

I WONDER what the circumstances were last Sunday which stimulated Nye Bevan in the course of a mass meeting at Belle Vue Park, Manchester, to describe the Tory Party as "lower than vermin". Did he lose his temper when heckled, or did the sentence pop out in the middle of one of his brilliant and biting perorations? Whatever the reason for the slip, if I know anything about the Tory Central Office, we have not heard the last of it. "Lower than vermin", along with the "Tinker's cuss", will be immortalized. Both are phrases which raised an immediate cheer among the Labour audience to which they were addressed, only to lose countless votes among the electors who don't attend party meetings but do decide election results. In my experience, most British people react hostilely to political abuse. Politicians fail to realize this because they live in a peculiar atmosphere of party politics, and address meetings which consist overwhelmingly of their own politically conscious supporters, salted with a few politically conscious opponents. In this atmosphere, invective is immensely effective, but it reads very differently next morning in cold print. Mr. Churchill won millions of votes for the Labour Party by abusing it in 1945. It would be a pity if Mr. Bevan, Churchill's only equal as a platform orator today, were to hand them back again to the party for which he feels "a deep, burning hatred".

20 NOVEMBER, 1948

"I EXPECT to see a sharp rise in production in the next few weeks," said my friend with much experience of psychological medicine. "Yes?" I said, "you mean the usual rise before Christmas?" "No, I mean an unusual rise due to the birth of the Royal baby. It is clear to me that in addition to the natural pleasure that a popular Princess has successfully given birth to a boy, there is a magical fertility element in all this monarchy business. People walk with a firmer tread and happier faces this morning. They feel better because a national rite has been successfully accomplished. I am not speaking without evidence. You will recall that at the Gravesend by-election

about a year ago Labour so unexpectedly won? Well, I wrote to several people before that election, confidently prophesying, against all the experts, that the Government would win because the voting would follow immediately on the marriage of Princess Elizabeth with the Duke of Edinburgh. That, too, was a fulfilment of magic. It made people feel better and less critical and dissatisfied and, therefore, inclined to vote with, rather than against, the Government. This time the event did not happen early enough to affect the Edmonton by-election, but it may put up production."



27 NOVEMBER, 1948

I DON'T think even William Morris foresaw the day when it would be a form of penalty to be a landlord and a privilege to be a rent-paying tenant. The abolition of private property might have been anticipated, but hardly the complete reversal of the landlord-tenant relationship. Yet in some industrial areas of the country this has already been the effect of the Rent Restrictions Act—coupled with the powers of the local authorities to insist on repairs. A friend of mine tells me that an unhappy Birmingham landlord showed him a year's bills for eight houses. The total rents were just over £200—the bills for repairs were nearly £300. And out of the rents the landlord had to pay rates, ground rent, and the water rate—making another £60 or so. He had tried to sell his property, but there were no offers. He was now at the stage where he was willing to give the houses away; but the tenants smiled and said, "No, thank you." One landlord in the same district got rid of four houses by presenting them to their tenants with a gift of £25 and a motor-cycle to go with each house. Of course, it's often the landlords' own fault. Neglect in the past has meant more repairs today than otherwise would have been needed. But, even so, ordinary running repairs on a reasonably well-looked-after house cost easily double what they did in 1939, and landlords with good records have not got much to spare. A tenant in a provincial town who pays a rent of ten or eleven shillings a week is no longer one of the exploited, but is in the happy position of getting his own back for previous years of bad treatment.

1 JANUARY, 1949

I CANNOT pretend to be surprised at the arrest of Cardinal Mindszenthy. When I saw him last summer I felt that for the first time I knew what a militant medieval ecclesiastic was really like. He is the sort of man who courts arrest in a period of social upheaval, who feels, it may be, ashamed if he is not persecuted by the apostles of anti-Christ. In his case the often vague charge of interference in politics and being a leader of reaction and so forth has a precise meaning. In conversation he was arrogant, but I would not like to draw the line between personal arrogance and confidence in the power of the Church he serves. As a thinker and propagandist his attitude is well illustrated by the story I was told in Budapest of how in a sermon before a great congregation he described seeing the tears flowing down the face of a plaster statue of the Virgin when it was returned from exile to its native land. He was choleric and violent and more contemptuous of the moderate, compromising wing of the Church than of the Government which had roused his ecclesiastical ire by deciding to secularize the schools. The Government seem to have been ready for a concordat of sorts if the Cardinal would agree to priests teaching within secular schools, but no such compromise was possible for Mindszenthy. That the Government regards him as dangerous I should gather from the fact that it charges him with currency offences, which have, from its point of view, the advantage of raising issues which the Papacy cannot include in its denunciation of religious persecution.

5 FEBRUARY, 1949

APPARENTLY Cardinal Mindszenthy, who, before his arrest, warned the world to ignore any "confession" which might be attributed to him, has now signed a "confession", in which, it is said, he admits committing such crimes as keeping in close touch with Britain and America (which he presumably did and why not?) and discussing Western intervention in Hungary (which I should be much surprised if he failed to do). Catholic priests in this country, on the instruction of their bishops, have given circumstantial accounts of how he was

worn down by "ordeal". Our usually unsensational contemporary, the Catholic *Tablet*, gave such a lurid account of the "drug-torture" which was used that a fortnight later it has published a note, supplied at its own request, by a medical authority who describes its account as "so highly coloured and melodramatic as to shock a medical man". The drug, which it claimed was used, is *Actedron*, which is supposed to destroy the nerve centres and paralyse the will. A simple inquiry, such as I have made, from any pharmacological authority could have told the *Tablet* that *Actedron* is in fact *benzedrine phosphate*, which certainly does not have the effects ascribed to it. Benzedrine is a long-familiar drug which some of us sniff when we have a cold, which is used to keep people awake and sharpen their faculties. Students sometimes use it for examination purposes. It was used by all three British Services during the war and the R.A.F. issued it in special kits to keep "escapees" on the go. The only way it could have been used to extract a confession from Mindszenthy was by artificially keeping him awake. Since the trial itself is to be public we should be able to judge for ourselves if there is any truth in these familiar allegations. If Mindszenthy is "drugged" in court, that will be obvious; if he has been drugged or tortured at an earlier stage he is not the man to keep silent before a public tribunal.



9 JULY, 1949

WHAT a brave and commanding figure Dimitrov was in 1933! For the moment he turned the table on the Nazis and gave hope and opportunity to their enemies. The London committee in defence of the victims of German Fascism was widely based. Ellen Wilkinson from her flat in Guilford Street was at the centre of much of the organization which was supported by Liberals, Labourites and Conservatives as well as Communists. The Reichstag trial was, however, the last in which such action as holding a "counter-process" in London could be effective; it was the last in which the Nazis permitted any serious defence or even a public hearing of any kind. Most of us underestimated the Nazi movement then—none worse than the Communists. I have just been looking through the book which was published after the trial called *Signed G. Dimitrov*. It is clear throughout that he was one of the group of professional revolutionaries who worked with the assurance of the proletarian

revolution not far ahead. Certainly he would have regarded it as totally impossible that only eight years after the Leipzig trial Hitler could invade the Soviet Union with an army drawn from the German working class and containing many who had been Communists. Probably his greatest achievement was to persuade the Communist Party in 1935 to adopt Popular Front tactics. This was one of those very rare occasions on which the Russian Party accepted or, indeed, listened to the advice of non-Russian Communists. As Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Dimitrov, who had been the close associate of Stalin, was himself to learn that to take any kind of an independent line was to earn a public rebuke, if not worse. Whether he was out of favour as well as out of health after his unlucky advocacy of Balkan Federation, no one seems to know. In power, he inevitably behaved like other Communist leaders. The outside world, if not Dimitrov, saw an unpleasant parallel between the trial of Petkov and the trial of Dimitrov fifteen years earlier. To accuse Dimitrov of "hypocrisy", however, is simply to misunderstand Communism. Dimitrov all his life was fighting a partisan battle for the victory of the Communist Party. He was not fighting at Leipzig for justice, a fair trial or freedom of speech. To imagine so was a bourgeois illusion.



29 OCTOBER, 1949

IN explanation of some of the appointments to the Labour Cabinets of 1924 and 1929 Mr. Sidney Webb used to say that Labour was like the older parties in having its "dukes", whose hereditary claims could not be overlooked. Just as it was once obligatory for Tory and Whig Cabinets to contain members of the Stanley and Cavendish families, so certain rich and powerful trade unions had a sort of prescriptive right to personal representation in Labour Governments. J. R. Clynes was often regarded as one of these dukes, who had to be in a Labour Government irrespective of their abilities. I don't myself think this fair to him. Clynes was a level-headed and shrewd little man whose long experience of working-class politics made him a valuable adviser. His period at the Home Office was not, I think, marked by any great distinction, but he had the singular merit that in moments of crisis he took an independent and honourable line. It was usually assumed that he stood on the extreme Right of labour politics, but, in fact, he was found on some very critical

occasions—notably in the General Strike and again in 1931—to be rather on the Left. The truth is that he genuinely belonged to the working class and was not muddled by the "aristocratic embrace". It is worth while too pointing out that Clynes began his career as a very poor boy and that, during a lifetime of serving the workers, being an M.P. and eventually a Cabinet Minister, he remained poor and died poor.

25 FEBRUARY, 1950

HERBERT MORRISON is probably right in saying that the days of victory won by a "Zinoviev letter" are over. He could have pointed out that every Tory victory of the last fifty years has been based on some kind of scare. 1901 was the most notorious of khaki elections; 1918 was fought on "hanging the Kaiser" and squeezing the German orange "until the pips squeaked"; 1931 was the scare about the pound and 1935 had to be won by prevarication because, as Mr. Baldwin explained afterwards, he wouldn't have been elected if he had told the truth. In 1945 the Gestapo stuff failed so dismally that Tory H.Q. has this time been doing its best to keep Churchill quiet. If stunts, conceived before the campaign, have been abandoned, that is mainly because the mass of the electorate is now sufficiently awake not to be readily deceived. Although the press is heavily against Labour, there is enough of it either friendly, neutral or anti-Conservative to explode sheer nonsense. Most important of all, political broadcasts defeat stunts. Attlee's quiet reply to Churchill in 1945 was decisive; the knowledge that he could reply has proved in 1950 an effective deterrent. As a result, the issues have been more seriously debated than I remember at any other election. All the broadcasters, except Mr. Bevin, have taken the trouble to discover something of the technique of broadcasting.

25 FEBRUARY, 1950

THE Liberal loudspeaker van in a London suburb made no bones about it. "Think once before you vote Labour. Think three times before you vote Tory. Don't think at all before you vote Liberal."



25 FEBRUARY, 1950

YOU now know who won. But why did who won win? A superb exercise in historical pluperfects; one man's guess will always be as unverifiable as another. With no facts at our disposal we may as well leave the last word with the loud-mouthed man in the public bar. Were the electorate as interested in the H-bomb as Churchill and Beaverbrook hoped or was the bomb still "foreign policy" and, in the voting, of little account compared with really important things like prices, houses and children's utility mackintoshes? How many floating voters did the Radio Doctor influence and, if any, were more of them attracted or repelled by that fruity bitterness? What was the proportion of Labour to Tory abstainers? When it came to the point did wives vote with their husbands after all? Not even Lord Woolton nor Mr. Morrison has the haziest idea, although that probably won't prevent them telling us.

Such agreeable ignorance will not last long in a scientific age. Social scientists have made a small start in the Greenwich constituency, where Mr. Mark Benney has directed a sociological survey for the London School of Economics. His report, when it appears, will certainly tell us far more about what really happened on the 23rd than the millions of words that will be written in the world's newspapers this week-end. But later on social scientists will get down to it in earnest. Their findings may eventually have a dangerously great effect on the voting. On this occasion, however, the man in the pub knows as much as the rest of us. His comment will follow his forecast. "It'll be muck or nettles anyway."



15 APRIL, 1950

SENATOR MCCARTHY has got more than he bargained for when he picked Owen Lattimore as the chief victim of his private witch-hunt. Mr. Lattimore used his chance of defending himself before the Senate sub-committee to launch a most vigorous and successful counter-attack. He charged the Senator with telling "base and incontemptible lies" and using "perverse and twisted quotations"; he said he was either "the instrument or dupe" of the paid lobbyists

of Chiang Kai-shek; that he was rehashing their stale propaganda in an effort to intimidate officials of the U.S. Government who did not share his fanaticism. After reading Mr. Lattimore's testimony, I am surprised that Senator McCarthy still goes on making himself look foolish, the more so since Senator Tydings told Mr. Lattimore that sub-committee members had gone through his F.B.I. file with J. Edgar Hoover and the Attorney-General and come to the unanimous conclusion that there was nothing to suggest that he had ever been a Communist or been in any way connected with espionage. McCarthy could only retort that Senator Tydings was lying or had not seen the file! I notice that McCarthy has so far declined to risk a libel action by repeating in unprivileged conditions his charge that Mr. Lattimore was "the top Russian espionage agent". All he will say now is that whether Owen Lattimore is a Russian spy or not, "he has done exactly what would be expected of such an agent".

5 AUGUST, 1950

AT an American university which has so far maintained the Liberal notion that ideas should be examined before they are judged, an enraged alumnus demanded at a public gathering to know whether it was true that students were "taught the doctrines of Communism". The President replied, "Yes, it is true. It is also true that medical students here are taught about syphilis. It does not mean that we approve, or are infected with, either of them."

2 DECEMBER, 1950

HOW will American doctors react to J. Edgar Hoover's appeal for them to become F.B.I. informers? He has just published an article in the journal of the American Medical Association asking, in a homely little metaphor, for doctors to help wipe out "the Communist germs" now trying "to infect the blood-stream of American life". He urges them to report to the F.B.I. any information of this kind which may come into their possession. Since this appeal is made to them specifically as doctors, and not merely as citizens, it seems clear that Hoover is asking them to violate the Hippocratic

Oath by using their professional position to spy on their patients. Picture the consequences. While the thermometer is in the patient's mouth, the doctor can snoop around the bookshelves or test his patient's loyalty by apparently casual questions. If he is an analyst, he can presumably report all his patient's secret thoughts and subconscious wishes. If Mr. Hoover persuades American doctors to turn informer, why should he not go a step further and ask priests to violate the secrecy of the confessional? An English medical friend points out to me that there are other departments which could profit by this new type of doctor. A new television set in the house? Send a report to the tax inspector. Betting slips? Summon the gambling squad. An unauthorized baby? Inform the Purity League. A thousand dollars in grandfather's mattress? Surely that is worth a percentage to any competent burglar. The prospects of this new kind of medicine seem limitless. The only danger, my medical friend points out, is that patients might begin to set the dogs on the doctor—which is what American doctors ought to do to Mr. Hoover.



23 DECEMBER, 1950

SARDAR PATEL was one of the ablest men in India and certainly the most powerful. He had none of the mysterious influence of Gandhi nor the personal following of Pandit Nehru. But he was the organizer and the boss of the Congress Party. If the full story is ever told, I think it will reveal that he was more responsible than Gandhi for the failure of the Cripps Mission in 1942. He was a representative of Indian big business; he wanted Indian independence and was prepared to go to gaol for it, but he shared none of the idealistic or Socialistic enthusiasms of other Congress leaders. I have seen it written that he and Nehru never quarrelled. This is entirely untrue. They quarrelled often and fundamentally. It is true, however, that since the British went out of India they both knew that India would fall to pieces unless they maintained a working alliance. The alliance looked like breaking up just before Gandhi's death. After it, they had perforce to hold together lest India should collapse into civil war. Between them Lord Mountbatten and Patel (with the help of C. P. Menon) were responsible for buying off the Princes and solving the problem of the states, thus preventing the often prophesied "balkanization" of India. In

general, Nehru and Patel managed together well enough because Patel maintained a Conservative home policy and left the conduct of foreign affairs and the public speech-making to Pandit Nehru.

In 1948 I was in New Delhi when Gandhi was killed, and I then met Patel on several occasions. He was already an old man but vigorous. He had not then had the heart attack which prevented him taking a daily walk at six o'clock in the morning, surrounded by admirers and interviewers whom he would not have time to see in the day. At lunch his formidable and silent daughter appeared to memorize everything that was said. I was told afterwards that she did in fact act as his Intelligence staff and made a verbatim record of the conversation. I learnt Patel's mind about Kashmir where I thought him more ready than Nehru to compromise, and about Hyderabad, where he was prepared to use force if necessary. At that time Patel was being accused of at least a measure of responsibility for Gandhi's death. As Home Minister, it was argued, Patel had been much too lenient towards the Mahasabha, who killed Gandhi because he was tolerant to Muslims, and to the R.S S.S., who were openly drilling and forming a kind of Hindu-Fascist movement. But I do not believe that Patel ever favoured any form of communal violence and I formed the impression that he was as deeply shaken by Gandhi's assassination as Pandit Nehru himself. He felt, I think, a certain measure of responsibility for it. He was a clear-headed and impressive man who was not inhibited by Nehru's scruples and inner conflicts. He was wonderfully obstinate, as the British had learned, but he was also a realist and, if you knew your own mind and put your cards on the table, he was a man with whom you could do business. It is too soon to hazard any comment about the effect of his death on Indian politics; obviously it is an immense loss to the Right. But it also removes the disciplinary hand which has kept the Right in order.



21 APRIL, 1951

IN one sense, the news that Ernest Bevin had died altered nothing. Since last spring he had been a dying man, and after his resignation from the Foreign Office he had been too infirm to contribute anything to Cabinet discussions. Yet when the B.B.C. made the announcement on Saturday and, even more, when Mr. Attlee's tribute

—recorded in hospital—was broadcast after the Sunday evening news, every listener, I suspect, felt as I did that an epoch had closed. With Bevin dead, Cripps gone and the Prime Minister a sick and rather isolated man, the peculiar type of Labour Government that we have had since 1945 is finished and the vitality which urged it on during its first four years of life is sputtering out. Whatever their qualities—and they are considerable—Morrison and Gaitskell are not political personalities who have been felt, like Cripps and Bevin, to be national rather than purely party spokesmen.

This—and not any superficial personal antagonisms—is the true explanation of the renewed tension between Morrisonians and Bevanites which is still rumbling despite Mr. Bevan's acceptance of defeat on the Budget. Since 1945 the Big Three, by their personal ascendancy, have maintained unity within the parliamentary party and the Labour movement. When we recollect the distance that the Government has moved from the ideas on which Mr. Attlee rode to power, we can see what an achievement that was. If a great many Socialist principles had to be dumped by the roadside, an astonishing amount was accomplished—a good deal more in fact than the total programme worked out in the years of Opposition. But today this particular stage of the journey is over; the pace of advance has slackened—or is the Party perhaps moving backwards?—and the surviving leaders, who have held office continuously since 1940, are very tired. Such moments must come in the life of every political party; and when they come to a party which has the responsibilities of office, the shift to a new leadership, with new maps of the road and fresh ideas, is always extremely perilous. There are bound to be deep and vigorous dissensions. Or rather, if there are no disagreements, and self-preservation enforces verbal unanimity, the party dies under the old leadership. Many eager voices are now demanding a grand Cabinet reconstruction. But a brand-new Government is impossible; new leaders can't be created by a wave of the wand. The Government is bound to be mainly concerned with preparing for the next election.



1 SEPTEMBER, 1951

No wonder Mr. Churchill's bald head looked cross as it stuck out of the water, side by side with that of his wife, in the Lido in Venice.

Is a man to have no private life? Is nothing sacred from the newspaper photographer? So said I to myself. And then I recalled a story of how on one occasion H. G. Wells scored off Bernard Shaw. G.B.S. arrived at lunch loudly complaining that he could not take a walk in the park without people staring at him, pointing at him, asking for his autograph, photographing him. "Well," said H.G., "if you don't like publicity, Shaw, why don't you cut off your beard?"



19 JANUARY, 1952

BROUGHT up in a political atmosphere so mild and tolerant as ours, one discovers with a shock in some parts of the world the deep fanaticism of apparently reasonable and sensible people. I was taught a lesson about this the other day in Beirut when I had a delicious Arab lunch with a Lebanese friend who had lived long in the West, and was apparently quite accustomed to dispassionate discussion of international problems. He seemed so thoroughly internationally minded that I allowed the conversation to drift on to the problem of Arab refugees and the Arab-Jewish problem in general. After a time, I incautiously remarked that while the Arab case against the State of Israel was clear enough, it must be remembered that to the Jews the picture was entirely different. I made some strong points on the Israelis' side. There was a pause, and then my Arab friend said very politely: "Well, I am afraid I have an appointment now. It has been very nice to see you . . ." Outside the restaurant I endeavoured to put things right; I asked if I had said something to offend him. . . . He cut me short: "Oh, no, not at all. I am entirely impartial in this matter. After all, some of my best friends are Jews. Of course, I do not know whether you are a Jew . . ."

Our friendship, which I much valued, was over. Though my Scottish, English and Huguenot grandparents might rise from the dead to testify to the absence of Jewish blood in my veins, nothing in the future would be of any avail. At best, I might be "one of his best friends".



1 MARCH, 1952

AN American friend sends me the latest campaigning story. A Southern Congressman is said to have wound up his oration with the following hundred per cent statement. "The one thing, brethern and sistern, that Ah hates, is racial intolerance and niggers."



12 JULY, 1952

IF the Dean of Canterbury had a sense of humour, his picture of thousands of Chinese children saving themselves and their country from typhoid by searching the fields for infected insects, and popping them into bottles with chopsticks, would go down to history as the prime example of ecclesiastical wit. Sidney Smith never thought of anything half so ridiculous. But the Dean's mind has no room for humour, being dominated by the naive and credulous vanity of a born actor who has long been flattered to the top of his bent. His latest performance has laughed out of court any useful discussion of the horrifying fact that both East and West are researching into the most efficient way of spreading various types of plague in each other's camps. From the West's point of view, the most foolish procedure would be to pass special legislation defrocking the Dean. He would at once become an important focus of Communist propaganda; his main effect today is to make it absurd.



19 JULY, 1952

I DON'T know who are the sillier—the people who want to indict the Dean for treason or those who assume that any Communist propaganda that he reproduces must be true. Several people who used to have logical faculties have written asking how I could both believe that there should be an inquiry into germ warfare and also laugh at the Dean's gullibility. It is because I believe there should be an inquiry that I am angry with the Dean for turning the whole thing

into ridicule. Obviously as long as the Powers continue to research into bacteriological warfare (U.S. experts have recently boasted of progress in this branch of horror) there is always the chance that some or other special service group might make a limited experiment in weather conditions which precluded a full-scale bacteriological attack; clearly, if this chance existed, it should be investigated. That is the opposite of the Dean's point of view, which is simple acceptance of whatever Communists tell him. Some people talk as if he were a lonely figure fighting for the truth against a hostile world. Actually he is the one Englishman who is universally feted and flattered throughout the entire Communist world where he is regarded as the only great and honourable member of the British bourgeoisie. The tragedy to my mind is that he does not use this unique and happy position to tell the Chinese that the hate propaganda now spread from Peking is not likely to promote peace, and he therefore forfeits confidence when he tells the West wholesome truths about Communism as a liberating factor in Asia. As it is he has done the maximum harm to the cause of peace, for people who can't believe what he said about germ warfare will also disbelieve what he says about the positive achievements of Mao Tse-tung. If he had wanted to do propaganda for MacArthur, he could not have spoken fairer. The odd thing is that people who used to be proud of seeing through Western atrocity propaganda are today the very people who at once believe every word when it comes from a Communist.

26 JULY, 1952

QAVAM, the comparatively pro-Western Persian politician who was selected by the Shah to make another attempt at an Abadan oil settlement, never had a chance of success. Those newspapers which reported that his life was threatened by the Muslim fanatics who follow Kashani are certainly right. The same group murdered Rasmara eighteen months ago, and Mossadeq has always known that his only hope of keeping alive himself, and avoiding civil war, was to be on good terms with Kashani. It was only last Christmas that I spent a couple of hours with this redoubtable mullah in his home outside Teheran. He is a small man with a black beard, a great deal of intelligence, and an aura of sanctity. I sat for some time in

his ante-room, where the fashions of the Middle East have been incongruously overlaid by those of Tottenham Court Road. While waiting I noted the number of clashing reds and purples in the room and contrasted the fine luxury of Eastern carpets with the comically tawdry china ornaments. A mixed crowd of followers stood or squatted outside in the bitter cold, and a group of the fatter personages sat and talked in whispers in the ante-room, which was heated with an oil stove. I was ushered into Kashani's presence and placed on his right hand. I asked him questions which he answered with great fluency and at length. After an hour and a half or so, he decided to consider me an anti-imperialist and, to my considerable surprise, kissed me on both cheeks. I was even more surprised when the next day I found that all the Teheran papers had a verbatim report of the interview which I had imagined to be off the record. It was all propaganda for the mullah. I'm afraid he never learned my views of him



6 DECEMBER, 1952

COMMUNIST approval of the death sentences in Prague must be some embarrassment to their world-wide campaign for the reprieve of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who are due to go to the electric chair on January 12th for their part in turning over atomic secrets to the U.S.S.R. Now that the appeal courts have refused to upset the Rosenberg trial, they can be saved from the death penalty only by a direct intervention by President Truman. The Rosenbergs were not tried for treason—for which U.S. courts have only twice imposed a death sentence—nor for giving aid to an enemy. Klaus Fuchs, who was part of the same espionage group, only received a sentence of fourteen years for his part in it. Moreover, the United States was nominally allied to Russia at the time of their offence. For these reasons, the death sentence seems both harsh and foolish. It will make martyrs of the Rosenbergs to millions who will never know the rights and wrongs of the case. And it will provide the Communists with just the diversion they need from the horrible farce in Prague. If Mr. Truman is wise, one of his last acts as President would be to commute this sentence and show that Western justice, at least, is tempered with mercy.

20 DECEMBER, 1952

THE Prague trials are the most savage stab in the back that the Communists have inflicted on themselves since the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. Clearly the effect has been devastating. I can recall no other case in which a Communist Minister has been forced publicly to explain and contradict rumours rife, not in the wicked Imperialist West, but within his own Communist country. Mr. Nejaldy, the Czech Minister of Education, fully admitted in his broadcast that the hanging of these devoted Communist leaders had caused widespread confusion. No, he said, their confessions were not due to drugs or torture or made in the vain hope of saving their lives. "Those who talked of psychological pressure were nearer the truth." And it had not been easy to get them to confess; they did so at last through the weight of "crushing evidence". The trial was "held in a Communist atmosphere of truth", and would Czechs please not spread suspicion or invent "bourgeois theories"? Now this kind of pleading might go down in the U.S.S.R., where there has never been anything except Tsarist or Soviet truth, but in a country with a democratic tradition of free speech and honest trials, and brought up to accept the theory that truth has something to do, not with Communism or any other -ism, but simply with verifiable statement of fact, I fear that bourgeois suspicions are bound to spread. As for the effect outside, it is clear that thoughtful Communists are half-distraught; someone has pointed out that Marty (the only non-Russian Communist famous enough still to have a Moscow street named after him?) is alive because his orthodoxy was impugned, not in Russia, but in still-bourgeois France. In Italy the unhappy Nenni (who would hang among the first if Italy became Communist) has tried to explain that he is against the death penalty and cannot explain the confessions, but nevertheless, in some esoteric sense, approves the executions. I find even this less nauseating than the letter, published in this journal last week, from ex-Commander Young, who saw some analogy between the Prague trials and the Bevanite quarrel in the Labour Party, but forgot to mention that Mr. Bevan is alive and that in Prague eleven men were hanged by the neck until they were dead.



3 JANUARY, 1953

THE applause which greeted Jack Longland's criticism of the McCarran Act during last week's "Any Questions?" shows what most of us feel about the extension of the witch-hunt to British and other foreign seamen. Just as the attempt to prevent Charlie Chaplin from returning to the States made the U.S. Attorney-General the laughing-stock of Europe, so this foolish and unnecessary screening has angered all sorts of people who have scarcely heard or cared about McCarthy and McCarran, or the State Department and Owen Lattimore. Nobody can take seriously the argument that such screening will keep out spies or subversive "couriers". Such men are certain to have the most respectable story to tell the over-worked immigration officials. In any case, spies are not caught by clumsy and noisily proclaimed laws. They are caught by counter-espionage, which works best where it has least publicity. The McCarran Act—of which the screening of seamen is only a tiny part—is the product of hysteria. It was fear lest their anti-Communist valour be suspect that stampeded the Senators and Congressmen into passing it over President Truman's veto, not any belief that it was wise or sensible. American immigration laws and procedure have long needed reform. But this Act has simply changed them for the worse by dropping what one American has called "McCarran's Red Tape Curtain" around the U.S.



7 MARCH, 1953

I AM glad to hear that Professor George Boas has organized a fund for the defence of Professor Lattimore, and that a substantial sum is being collected. One of the most shocking aspects of the witch-hunt is that even men who escape all the traps laid for them in repeated trials are financially ruined by them. Perhaps more turns on the Lattimore case than any other. He is charged with having perjured himself by denying that he was "a sympathizer and promoter of Communist interests". An American professor, who in this country might be regarded at most as a mild Liberal, writes to point out the grave danger inherent in this additional charge. It provides a tech-

nique by which McCarthyites can smear or imprison every man who supported Lend-Lease, or Unrra, or, indeed, who served in the Administration during the period from 1941 to 1946 when America and the U.S.S.R. were fighting the same enemies. The method is to accuse the victim of pro-Communism. When he says that, on the contrary, he is anti-Communist, he is shown to have supported measures, or administrative policies, that were helpful to the Russians or the Chinese Communists. He is then accused of perjury because he said he was anti-Communist!

The only escape from this trick is for the smeared victim to say boldly from the beginning: "Yes, of course, I favoured the Communists when they were our allies. You accuse me (as in the Lattimore case) of showing bias against Chiang Kai-shek when I edited *Pacific Affairs*. What if I did? The Chinese Communists were fighting the Japanese; the Kuomintang was not. I am always pro-Communist when Communists are fighting on the same side as the United States. Mr. Roosevelt, General Marshall and I agreed about this because we wanted an American victory. Am I to understand that McCarthy and McCarran were opposed to supporting those who were fighting against the enemies of the United States during the war? If so, who is the traitor?"



21 MARCH, 1953

PERSONALLY, I was wedged tightly in a corner near Scotland Yard. When I arrived, Tito was expected within half an hour. We waited for two hours. Fortunately it was sunny and the crowd was lively. Someone suggested that Tito had dropped in for a pint at the Prospect of Whitby. When the police motor-cyclists came out, with all exhausts firing, we tried sympathetically to imagine the feelings of one of them if he had a puncture. And then we had the moment for which everyone, I suppose, had been unconsciously hoping. Just as Tito was getting into his car there was a flash and a bang behind us. Was this really it? Had someone thrown a bomb, or, as I imagined for a second, was this a diversion to cover the activities of a real assassin? Pushed from behind we surged forward, forcing the mounted police several yards into the road—a magnificent effort that could not have been achieved by anything

less than an explosion. I looked back in time to see the tobacconist and photographic shops behind us momentarily hidden in a cloud of smoke. We easily stamped out some newspaper burning on the ground. Sternly we waited ready to repeat our observations—and feelings—to the police, who were not very interested. No one was seriously hurt. Tito had not been disturbed; Mr. Churchill would not even have heard the muffled bang of the magnesium flare. We should like to have been wanted, but we were not. Primed with talk, we shuffled off homeward where we were certain of a receptive audience.



25 APRIL, 1953

I FEAR that Mr. Cohn and Mr. Schine have returned to America with a sense that they haven't been fully appreciated. Some journalists have written almost as if Cohn and Schine were the names of two crooners in a musical. Actually, one is a lawyer and the other a millionaire's son, which should of course win them the highest consideration, even if they were not witch-hunting for Senator McCarthy. Some people have thought them too young and inexperienced. This is to misconceive their job and the qualifications demanded. Older and more experienced men might have hesitated to report on America's Information Services in Europe on the basis of one day per country. These two remarkable young men were able to decide whether these Services were being carried out efficiently and whether the personnel was loyal in Germany and Austria, for instance, merely by interviewing some 140 officials in about four working days. Older and experienced men could not have rivalled this feat. They would have been bothered, too, by such arguments as that libraries ought to contain Marxist literature because Marx, like other authors, cannot be refuted without being read. Liberal arguments of this type do not confuse people with the strong, simple purposes of Messrs. Cohn and Schine. Men with experience would not expect to understand the B.B.C. and its relation with parties and governments after half an hour's talk. In short, these two young men with unformed, but tightly shut minds, like aborted rosebuds, are just what Senator McCarthy needs to enable him to declare, on high authority, that Radio Free Europe contains 763 Communists and crypto-Communists; that the B.B.C. is engaged in anti-American

propaganda, and that the whole Service must be speedily purged and restocked with personnel which can be relied on to work for McCarthy as President in 1956.



9 MAY, 1953

WITH the help of Mr. Cohn, Senator McCarthy discovered that Wechsler, the pugnacious editor of the *New York Post*, was a member of the Young Communist League from 1934 to 1937, and, being now one of the most prominent anti-Communist liberals, had written a book which was on the shelf of some official American library overseas. This gave him an excuse to summon Wechsler, though the book was never mentioned during the examination, and though no notice was taken of the fact that the book bitterly attacked the Communist faction in U.S. trade unions. This simple fact was unlikely to impress McCarthy, whose purpose seems to have been to intimidate an editor whose newspaper has been one of his most effective critics. Seeking to prove that he is actually hated by the Communists, Wechsler produced a document issued by the Central Committee of the C.P. last year which denounced him, along with David Dubinsky and Walter Reuther. Wechsler describes the scene in the *New York Post*:

> I thought it might even jar McCarthy. I underestimated the man. Suddenly the faint, familiar smile vanished from his face. "Did you write that statement?" he asked sullenly. At first I wondered whether I had heard him correctly. When he made it clear that I had, I asked whether this statement was facetious. He repeated it, this time broadening it to ask me whether I or one of my deputies had inspired this Communist attack on me. In what I will always recall as one of the most preposterous moments of my life, I thereupon solemnly denied under oath that I was the author of Communist statements denouncing myself!

Wechsler adds that McCarthy has greatly improved on the technique of regarding a witness as guilty until proved innocent. A Joe McCarthy inquiry, as he found from personal experience, "is also the place where the existence of proof of innocence becomes damning evidence of guilt". Having decided that the accused is guilty of Communism, any denunciation of him by Communists is

merely a "cover". You are caught either way. When it became clear that McCarthy was really fishing for facts that might help him discredit the *Post*, Wechsler told him bluntly that "neither the *Post* nor I planned to purchase tranquillity by discovering at this late hour that Joe McCarthy is a statesman and a scholar". I shall be surprised if McCarthy is willing to publish a verbatim account of this damning session.

Americans who used to chide me for grossly exaggerating the reactionary forces in the United States now write to me in very different vein. One of them, deeply ashamed at the McCarthy cult, prophesies that he will commit suicide within six months: another reassures himself, if not me, by recalling the fate of Huey Long.

23 MAY, 1953

SENATOR MCCARTHY, I am told, first decided that anti-Communism was a paying proposition on the evening of January 7th, 1950. He was looking for a good campaign issue—he had a pension plan in mind—when his dinner partner, Father Walsh, threw in the idea of Communist infiltration of government service. McCarthy saw in this the road to personal power. Father Walsh, who is a Jesuit, is the dean of the foreign-service school at the Catholic Georgetown University in Washington. This school is one of the most important training centres for State Department officials and diplomats. Many of its students are not Catholics, but are sent there by the State Department for special courses. Father Walsh must have a pretty good notion of the inside politics of the State Department. Both as a Catholic and a teacher, he is no doubt anxious to see his pupils make good. I suppose, too, that there is a great deal of rivalry between his school and its academic competitors. One of these was at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and Owen Lattimore was its outstanding teacher. Lattimore, of course, was one of the first victims of McCarthy's witch-hunt, and, to my distress, I hear that Johns Hopkins, where reason is respected as much as anywhere I know, has now closed its special school of international relations. Indirectly, this is bound to strengthen the influence of Georgetown as a finishing school for American diplomats. Its graduates, I am sure, will all have a clean bill from McCarthy.

16 MAY, 1953

THE break-up of the Gaullist organization in France reminds me, oddly enough, of an old conversation with Madame Tabouis. I had known her, of course, in the days of the Churchill Grand Alliance (sometimes called the Popular Front) when her inside information was such that people used to speculate whether she had spent the night before under Hitler's or Stalin's bed. There was even a memorable occasion when I took the chair for her, and she began her speech by referring to our recent meeting in Paris, when, she said, I had been negotiating a financial agreement on behalf of Britain. I was somewhat slow in realizing that she had been misled by a superficial resemblance between her chairman's name and that of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Kingsley Wood. No such error occurred when we met in the train between Chicago and New York on our way home from the San Francisco Conference in 1945. She spoke of the plight of France, saying that the days of *gloire* were over; France must maintain her world influence by her cultural ascendancy. We discussed whether *esprit* could survive without *gloire*. The certainty was that France would lose everything if she followed General de Gaulle in attempting to retain *gloire*. Unhappily, that is just what the French did in Indo-China when they refused to make terms with Ho Chi Minh. The result has done all too much to justify General Smuts's much resented prophecy in 1940. There are idiots who attribute France's confusion to Communism. In fact, Communists form the largest party because Frenchmen see no useful purpose in winning one war against the Kaiser only to rebuild an even worse Germany under Hitler, and then, when Hitler is defeated, in once again building a Nationalist Germany as part of a new organization in which the role of France would be to become an American bomber base.

6 JUNE, 1953

ENGLAND has no Republican Party, and is not likely to have one in the near future. But I would hazard a bet that the Coronation has increased the number of inarticulate people who feel that, after all,

the whole thing is out of date, antiquated stuff, deliberately revitalized as a means of setting back the democratic clock. Remember that TV works both ways. Because so many millions could enjoy the pageant, the Queen is more popular than any former monarch. But many people, who were happy to cheer her, were shocked to find that her Coronation was wholly feudal. They had been told that the monarchy symbolized our increasingly democratic way of life; but they watched a beautifully produced theatrical performance in which almost no one below the rank of a baron took part (was not the black Moderator the only exception?), while, apart from the Queen herself, the chief roles were played by the Archbishop, the Mistress of the Robes, and other medieval persons. What is the sense of taking all the aristocracy out of moth-balls (not even leavening it with the Commons) and then telling us we are watching something that represents Britain and the Commonwealth? How came it that such an opportunity for real symbolism was missed? Working-class England was simply forgotten. And what of the Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu and African worlds? The Queen of Tonga's popularity should at least have given a hint. But no, after months of steady B.B.C. and newspaper build-up we were given a ceremony more national, more exclusive, more medieval than ever before. David Low gets it right in his *Manchester Guardian* cartoon. On the morning after, the floor is littered with fairy-story books and the face in the television set is that of Reality, less comely and consoling than Queen Elizabeth's. I have often argued the case for an increasingly democratic monarchy as most suitable to a nation aiming at a Welfare State. But we are not now moving towards the "king on a bicycle".



6 JUNE, 1953

ON Coronation morning in my own village we fetched to the new memorial hall all the old people who couldn't get there under their own steam. And after a terrible quarter of an hour when it seemed as if the three television sets were all bewitched (they proved merely to be switched off at the main), a hundred people (which is about half the total population) sat down to enjoy themselves. Everyone did, I think, until the point when the Queen was actually crowned. After that, people became restive; the Communion service was

frankly a bore; the proportion of people who believed in the religious side of the Coronation was obviously very small. One (sophisticated) young woman afterwards said to me that she loved the pageantry, but found the religion repulsive and could scarcely help laughing at comic stuff about the Gold and Silver Sticks, the Blue and Red Mantles, and the various Garter dignitaries. One village housewife said, quite solemnly, when the Queen appeared: "She couldn't buy that robe out of her housekeeping money, could she?" And a particularly pious churchgoer remarked, as we looked out at the driving rain: "I don't want to be blasphemous, but I do feel that God Almighty might have done his bit, too."



3 OCTOBER, 1953

MUCH that all of us want to say about the Moral Rearmament movement has been, I am glad to say, admirably put by those influential trade union leaders, Reuther and Deakin. I recall a strenuous effort made in pre-war days to rope me into the profitable and snobbish fold of Buchman. Amongst other forms of polite persuasion I was asked to a week-end where, at the house of a well-known business man, a very popular writer described his sudden "change"—a change much for the worse, judging from his writings. A stockbroker's wife, who had hitherto done little except play bridge, had saved her home from disaster by learning from Dr. Buchman to offer a welcoming smile for her husband when he came home in the evening, and by providing better conditions for a servant who was threatening, like many others before her, to find a more considerate employer. A North of England business man solemnly told me that his profits had greatly increased since he was "changed"; as an example of the improvement, he explained how an employee, whom in the old days he would have sacked out of hand, had turned into his best salesman because he had taken the trouble to find out the cause of his incompetence and lend him the money to pay off an embarrassing debt. Everybody was sure that God's guidance was good business. Industrially and politically, the gist of Buchmanism was to support Hitlerism and to persuade trade unionists that it would pay them best never to strike or do more than speak kindly to their employers about possible wage increases or better conditions.

One of the officers of the Movement, whom I tackled about its finances, solemnly assured me that their expenses, even though they were staying in the best hotels, were always provided by God, because it always happened when they were wondering how to pay the bill that God (through the agency of some wealthy friend whom they happened to inform of their need) always came to the rescue in the finish. The least pleasing aspect of this comfortable religion is its snobbery. I have always remembered the story of the lady who said she was so grateful to Dr. Buchman "because he introduced her both to Christ and to the Queen of Rumania".



9 JANUARY, 1954

DUFF COOPER was an eighteenth-century figure. He regarded politics as the duty of a gentleman; they might become a full-time job during a war or other emergency, but were perfectly compatible with literary achievement and the constant enjoyment of life in High Society. In this and some other respects, he was a smaller edition of Winston Churchill. Unlike Winston, he was no outstanding administrator, and, perhaps because of Lady Diana, never wholly ceased to appear in the public eye as a conspicuous social figure. He enjoyed life as few men do, and he had an old-fashioned habit of becoming furiously indignant about what he thought wrong and wanting to hit someone responsible with his fists. He shared Winston's reputation for bulldog courage, and won great popularity by his revolt against Chamberlain and his resignation after Munich. He also spoke French with an accent rather different from Winston's, and was acknowledged in Paris as a man who really understood and loved France. I believe that one of Ernest Bevin's greatest mistakes was in leaving the old diplomats in their ambassadorial jobs after the war. If Labour was really the new broom that it promised to be, Mr. Attlee's Government needed a different type of representative abroad. Certainly Duff Cooper was an odd representative for a Labour Government; his remaining in Paris made the Continent think that Labour meant no change. But there was much to be said for Duff Cooper as French Ambassador. I vividly remember a conversation with him at the Embassy in Paris, some time, I think, in 1947. The Communist Party, the largest in France, was deliber-

ately excluded from any share in French government by a coalition of anti-Communist parties sponsored by the Americans and the British. Duff Cooper said in a most uncompromising way that he had a great admiration for Thorez, the Communist leader, and that the right solution for France was to allow the Communists to take office. I said: "That's rather surprising coming from so good a Conservative as you." He replied to this effect: "In opposition, Communists must, of course, follow the Moscow line; put them in office and they are bound to take account of the needs and desires of the French workers. Thorez is as good a Frenchman as de Gaulle, and if he is Prime Minister, the French Communists will necessarily become a French Socialist party, patriotic, and seeking the good of France." I still think this excellent sense, and any distaste I might have for the Ascot-and-Ciro's Duff Cooper has always been offset by my memory of this conversation.

His autobiography, *Old Men Forget*, contains plenty of proofs that he had, on occasion, good political judgment. In his early days, especially, he was a shrewd type of Conservative. He hated the Lloyd George Coalition. Here is a characteristic sentence: "My opinion of it [the Coalition] sank still lower when the failure of the ignoble Black-and-Tans experiment in Ireland, an attempt to suppress gangsterdom by gangsters in uniform, was followed by the still more ignoble surrender to a campaign of murder." That, if you like, is having it both ways, but it is a justifiable view, because he adds, a few pages later, that: "Many of the failures of British statesmanship have been due to the reluctance of Ministers to deal with a problem so long as postponement was possible. Too often have we been forced in the end to accept an unsatisfactory and even a humiliating solution because we have refused at the beginning to agree to a far better one. Too often have we conceded grudgingly and too late much more than would have been accepted gladly and gratefully at an earlier date." He then illustrates this familiar thesis by the story of the efforts of Lloyd George and the Winston faction of the Cabinet to refuse concessions to Egypt in 1920, ending in their subsequent surrender to Allenby, who, as a soldier on the spot, understood what Sir Winston Churchill, even in 1954, seems unable adequately to appreciate.

16 JANUARY, 1954

LLOYD GEORGE once told me that no lawyer who had made a success at the Bar ever made a good politician if he switched in middle age; the habit of speaking to a brief is too deeply implanted. This was a more profound comment on Lord Simon than L.G.'s often quoted jibe about sitting on the fence until the iron had entered into his soul. A trace of Simon's nonconformist radicalism remained in 1914 when he nearly, but not quite, resigned from the Cabinet with Morley and Burns. It came out strong in 1916 when he did resign over conscription. There were still traces of it left when I first heard him make a great speech in Cambridge denouncing black-and-tannery after the war. But there seemed nothing left except the political lawyer in 1926, when he grossly strained the law, as it seemed to me, in his speeches on the General Strike. (They were, of course, politically very successful since they called the bluff of Labour leaders who should have stuck it out and risked going to prison if they believed in their own cause.) As a Foreign Minister, Simon was a disaster. The charge against him during the Manchurian affair was not that he rejected sanctions against Japan, but that he fell over backwards in speaking to Tokyo's brief. Similarly, in the deathly years of struggle before the war, when he was one of the four men ruling England, I do not recall from Simon any word that suggested understanding or sympathy with Hitler's victims. He may have felt it but, great lawyer as he was, he could speak only to the head and not to the heart of the common jury. In his later days I became sorry for him, for he was conscious that in the law, politics and diplomacy he had triumphed over much, but not over his constitutional coldness. He desired warm companionship, and there was pathos in the remark that no man had ever taken the arm of so many other men and then called them by the wrong Christian names.

29 MAY, 1954

IT is too soon yet to know whether Ed Murrow's televised attack on McCarthy marked the turning-point in American opinion. But

since Murrow's programme on March 9th the tide seems to have been running strongly against the Senator. I have just read an analysis of the many thousands of letters that Ed Murrow received in the first fortnight: they ran about ten to one in his favour. He also seems to have helped those who are circulating anti-McCarthy petitions, for I see that Leroy Gore—the Sauk City editor who wants the voters of Wisconsin to recall their junior Senator—has already collected nearly a third of the 400,000 signatures State law requires. Then there is the success of the special issue of the *Progressive*, that excellent monthly magazine that is published right on McCarthy's doorstep in Madison, Wisconsin. Its editor, Morris Rubin, has long put up a courageous fight in the radical tradition of the La Follettes, and his April issue was devoted entirely to a full and hard-hitting exposure of McCarthy's seamy history. By the end of the month, at least 200,000 copies had been sold. One news-stand distributor had to take six times his original order of 10,000, and I hear that the *Progressive* has been receiving about one thousand letters a day. It is obvious that there is a vast demand for ammunition to fire off at McCarthy and his local adherents. A poll taken by a Rhode Island newspaper shows that since the hearings began on the McCarthy-Army feud, most of the "don't knows" have swung against McCarthy, and that his supporters are now in a definite minority. It looks as though ordinary Americans have at last begun to stand and fight.



11 SEPTEMBER, 1954

THE other day a very agreeable young man, who represents a well-known United States magazine, asked for an appointment. He explained, somewhat shamefacedly, that his editor had instructed him to write an account of "anti-Americanism" in this country, and as I should certainly be included, he thought it only fair to hear what I had to say about it. We met, and when he asked if I would admit to being "anti-American", I said, "I am opposed to McCarran, McCarthy, McCormick, and all the other Irish Macs who, under the pretext of religion or patriotism, stir up hatred against Britain and social democracy. Outside that, I count Americans as amongst my best friends." What a wonderful book there is waiting for

someone to write about the long-distance effect of the British persecution of the Irish in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries! Here, indeed, is a case of the wheels of God grinding slow but sure. All over the world the descendants of the aggrieved Irish, whom we turned from their native countries, hate the British, and carry on an effective propaganda against British imperialism. A few years ago an English visitor could scarcely move in America without finding himself beset by angry people denouncing Britain's failure to quit India and half a dozen other countries where America has now built or hopes to build air bases. Although this was often quite embarrassing for a British anti-imperialist, he realized, that though exaggerated in the mouths of the Irish exiles, the charges were broadly justified. Today the British are still criticized in America, and it is still the Irish who organize the anti-British feeling. But now that we are really becoming anti-imperialists, the bitterness and the imperialism of the McCarthys, the McCormicks, and the McCarrans take the form of denouncing us as Socialists, and, above all, as "anti-Americans". Perhaps we ought to forget that superiority which has always made us too proud to answer back. We might select a few of the daily vituperations made in America against Britain, and start a campaign against the anti-Britishism so rife in the United States.



18 SEPTEMBER, 1954

I AM not surprised that a South African resident here protested at Mr. John Hatch's statement in this journal that a non-European woman in South Africa was gaoled for having sexual intercourse with a White man, while he was acquitted on the plea that he had committed not copulation, but rape. It sounded too fantastic. It was, however, perfectly true. The facts are that at Groblersdal the African woman and European man were charged under the Immorality Act of 1927, as amended in 1950. This act renders any sexual union between European and non-European a criminal offence. The African woman was sent to prison for four months. Six weeks later the man stood trial and put in his defence as one of rape, which is excluded from the terms of the Immorality Act. He was acquitted. A month later, after the injustice had been published, the woman was released, two weeks before her sentence was due to expire.

Lest anyone should think that this is a rare and extraordinary case in South Africa, I quote a South African Press Association report of another contrast in official South Africa's notion of the relative value of coloured and White people. On August 19th, the *Natal Mercury* reported that a coloured man was sentenced to death for raping a European woman. Just below, on the same day, another news item gave details of the trial of a fifty-year-old European military pensioner who was sentenced to nine months with compulsory labour for raping an eleven-year-old Indian girl, who gave birth to a child as a result. The judge, apparently by way of mitigation of the sentence, explained that the European "perhaps through no fault of his own, had a poor background", and added, strangely enough, that Indian children marry at an early age.

16 OCTOBER, 1954

A FEW weeks ago, a friend was discussing Indo-China with a prominent American liberal. "Isn't it true," he asked, "that at the time of the Dien Bien Phu crisis, Radford and Dulles were prepared to risk a general war and that orders were prepared for U.S. aircraft carriers to sail?" The American was scandalized. "A typical anti-American lie," he said. I wonder what he thinks now, for I assume that he has read the sensational article which recently appeared in the *Reporter*, written by Chalmers M. Roberts. This gives the most detailed account I have seen of the events leading up to that April week-end when, as Nehru said shortly afterwards, the world hovered on the edge of the abyss. On the morning of Saturday, April 3rd, Dulles and Radford called eight senior members of Congress to a secret meeting in the State Department. They were asked whether Congress would pass a joint resolution to permit the President to use air and naval power in Indo-China. After Dulles had drawn a grave picture of the emergency facing the U.S., Admiral Radford described his plan. Two hundred planes from the carriers *Boxer* and *Essex* would be joined in a massive air strike by land-based aircraft from the Philippines. He was asked whether this would mean war. Yes, it would. If it did not save Dien Bien Phu, would there be a follow up? "Yes." Senator Knowland, who had at first seemed pleased with the plan, gradually became more gloomy. Then Senator Johnson asked whether Radford's scheme had the approval of the other

Joint Chiefs. "No," said Radford, "but I have spent more time in the Far East than any of them and I understand the situation better." Had any of America's allies been consulted? "No," said Dulles.

The Congressmen made it clear to Dulles that they were not prepared to go it alone. He spent the next three weeks in frantic negotiations—out of which Seato eventually came—that culminated in his meeting with Bidault in Paris on Friday, April 23rd. When Bidault asked for intervention, he was told that it depended on the British. Next day Radford arrived in Paris, and there told Eden that if the British approved the plan, the President would go to Congress on the Monday—the day on which the Geneva Conference was due to open—and ask for authorization to intervene; the strike on Dien Bien Phu, he added, could take place on the Wednesday. That was when Eden suddenly returned to London for a special Cabinet meeting. Threatened with the collapse of the Geneva Conference, and with the danger of general war in the Far East, Britain refused to accept the plan and thus give the moral cover of "united action" to unilateral American intervention. War seems to have been averted by the reluctance of Congress to go it alone and by Britain's refusal to go it at all.



27 NOVEMBER, 1954

Now that he is dead, all the world unites in recalling that Vyshinsky was in private life a very agreeable, witty and likeable fellow. Nor could anyone who ever heard him speak withhold admiration from him as a masterly dialectician and a compelling rhetorician. It is fair to add, too, that he was not a maker of Soviet policy, and that, even in the purge of the thirties, when he earned abhorrence by the savagery with which he demanded the deaths of his old comrades, he was only acting as legal advocates are supposed to do in every country in the world. Nevertheless, it is in this nauseating role of persecutor that Vyshinsky will be most remembered in history. There must, indeed, be few today who believe that Bukharin, Radek, and the rest, were anything but convinced Communists and loyal Soviet citizens. After all, did not the police chief, who framed the charges against them, himself die as a traitor? Vyshinsky must himself have savoured the irony of the fact that the post-war purges in satellite countries, which followed closely the pattern of those in

Moscow fifteen years earlier, are also now implicitly admitted to have been fakes, mere incidents of faction fighting within the Communist hierarchy. With Anna Kethly and other innocent people—including opponents and friends of Communism—released from gaol, the Kremlin, for the time being at least, seems to have turned its face away from persecution. It would be interesting to overhear the conversations in the next world when Vyshinsky meets, not only the victims of the pre-war purge, but also Communist stalwarts like Rajk and Otto Simon.



8 JANUARY, 1955

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S broadcast on "Man's Peril from the Hydrogen Bomb" fittingly closed 1954. It was the wisest utterance of his extraordinary career. The moment was well chosen; if war feels less imminent now than it did twelve months ago, it is because both blocs, now armed with hydrogen bombs, obviously fear to run too great a risk. But our peril is not averted by the postponement of a war which the experts agree is quite likely to end the human race itself. Experiments with hydrogen bombs now produce incalculable results; the atomic "fall-out" may be lethal in any part of the world. American experts have settled in Japan for twenty-five years to watch for the genetic effects of even the comparatively trivial bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thus, for the first time, man is compelled to abolish war or commit racial suicide. Bertrand Russell, who is far from neutral in feeling, said that if he were in control of a neutral government, "I should certainly consider it my paramount duty to see to it that my country would continue to have inhabitants." He suggests that some of the neutral Powers should "appoint a commission of experts, who should all be neutrals" to report and bring pressure on the Great Powers to end this perilous situation. This seems to me eminently practical. My only addition (one that this journal has urged ever since 1945) is that Britain, which is particularly vulnerable, should make itself one of the "uncommitted" Powers, refusing itself to be an atomic base and accepting Russell's advice to appeal, not on a basis of nationality or ideology, but as a nation of human beings who want to survive.

5 FEBRUARY, 1955

MACARTHUR gone Commie? That must have been the reaction not only of Knowland, Nixon and the China Lobby, but also of a great many ordinary newspaper readers. It is not easy at first sight to square last week's eloquent and pacific birthday speech with the sabre-rattling of the bellicose Commander-in-Chief who so nearly plunged the world into war on the Yalu river. Yet, in a sense, MacArthur's theme today in calling, apparently with the utmost seriousness, for the abolition of war is not totally unrelated to his past military doctrines. For at the time of the Korean war his "crime" was not that of desiring the Third World War, but of calculating that America could smash the Chinese revolution in a limited action which would not provoke general war. It is perfectly true that MacArthur has always been the apostle of U.S. imperialism in Asia: indeed, it was part of his family inheritance. But, even more than that, he is the arch-professor among the professional soldiers: he has always believed that there was a military solution to every problem and used to ask no more than the opportunity to be allowed to demonstrate it. The significance of last week's remarks is not, I should say, that his political views have changed very much, but that his professional insight has shown him the impossibility of waging anything less than total war with modern weapons of mass destruction. They suggest a realization that the weapons with which the military commander is furnished today are such that they cannot be used for any rational and discriminate object. This discovery is shared by other important people, including Sir Winston Churchill. In recent weeks (and in varying contexts and idioms) the Russian Marshal Vassilevsky, our own Liddell Hart, and now MacArthur have all used their strictly professional knowledge to warn the politicians to stop playing with fire.

4 JUNE, 1955

I HAVE always found it difficult to believe that Jomo Kenyatta, an able, highly educated and much-travelled African nationalist, could really have been guilty of "managing Mau Mau". After reading

Montagu Slater's *The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta* (Secker & Warburg, 18s.) I am even more surprised that he should have been convicted on that count. Counsel for the Prosecution said, I thought very reasonably, that Kenyatta might have painted himself as "a tough, fighting politican who had certain strong views; disliked Europeans intensely and did not care who knew it; was fighting for the rights of his own people; and, in fact, said, 'Yes, I wanted you out. . . . I do not advocate throat-cutting and arson and things like that, but I dislike anybody being in this country but the Africans, and I do not care who knows it.' " That, I should have guessed, was about the truth. If his two visits to Moscow influenced his conduct, as they probably did, then his tactics may well have been revolutionary but very improbably mixed up with this disgusting business of thorns and sheeps' eyes and sexual perversions. The evidence for "managing" Mau Mau produced at the trial did not seem to me to be worth tuppence; some of it, indeed, could have been obtained for a smaller sum. But it was the magistrate's comments that I found most disturbing. He seemed naïvely indignant because the Kikuyu believe they had been robbed of their land—something that seems obvious to almost all Africans because otherwise how do the British come to own land in Kenya at all?—and surprised that Kenyatta had an "obsession" about "the colour bar or alleged racial discrimination". He appeared to confuse, as if they were one and the same crime, the organized effort to throw the British out of Kenya and the murderous activities of Mau Mau which, as Sir Philip Mitchell pointed out last week, have most of them been directed not against Europeans, but against other Kikuyu. I remain of the opinion that Kenyatta was the active revolutionary leader of the Kenya African Union and that he watched with repulsion the ugly black magic of Mau Mau, but lacked the courage, and perhaps the ability, to suppress it.



25 JUNE, 1955

EVERYONE who has visited America recently comes back with stories to illustrate the way in which the political mood has changed for the better. I take this one from a report made by Leo Huberman, one of the editors of *Monthly Review*, who has just toured fifteen big American cities that he last visited just over a year ago. He quotes

a night-club entertainer in San Francisco who said: "It's not McCarthy*ism* but McCarthy*wasm*." The comedian, Huberman adds, boasted that America was not taking any guff from the Iron Curtain countries. "No, sir. Every time they lock up an American, we hit right back. We go out and lock up another American." Huberman comments that a year ago no one would have made such comments in a public place. Today, this comic has just been signed by a big television network for a national programme.



5 NOVEMBER, 1955

SUBMERGED under the "human interest" of the Princess Margaret story, commentators have been slow to scrutinize her statement of renunciation. It raises sharp constitutional issues. The Princess declared that she has been "aware that, subject to my renouncing my rights of succession, it might have been possible for me to contract a civil marriage". This seems to imply that a civil marriage could have been possible only if the succession were renounced. But who has made her "aware" of any such thing? Is it even true? The right of succession is peculiarly a matter for Parliament. If Parliament had repealed the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, which the Premier tells us he has considered asking it to do, would not the whole of this sentence be beside the point? Even with the law as it stands, the Princess should not have been made aware that her marriage was subject to her renouncing her right of succession. Being over twenty-five, she has the right to marry whom she pleases and as she pleases, provided that she gives twelve months' notice, and Parliament does not object. She has been made "aware" of a probably untrue and certainly highly controversial doctrine. Again, when she says that she is "mindful of the Church's teaching that Christian marriage is indissoluble, and conscious of my duty to the Commonwealth", she seems to have been dubiously advised. The Anglican Church's view about divorce is not authoritatively determined, like that of Rome, and the view of the present Archbishop rests, I'm told by lawyers and ecclesiastics, on nothing more fixed than a resolution of Convocation. Further, in mentioning "her duty to the Commonwealth", Princess Margaret was clearly referring to her duty in the matter of her choice between the succession and

marrying a man who had obtained a divorce. Who told her that her duty as a Princess demanded that she should uphold the Archbishop's view? She consulted him; he has made no secret of his dogma. But surely no one except our Parliament and the Governments of other Commonwealth countries has any right to make any statement involving such a choice. The question of succession is not a matter for the royal prerogative (or for the Archbishop) but for the British and the other Commonwealth Premiers. If Sir Anthony had been consulted (as he should have been the moment the question of succession arose) he would have been bound to give Princess Margaret the opposite advice. The Premier's own marriage, according to the Archbishop's doctrine, is not a true marriage, and neither he nor his Cabinet nor the House of Commons, which have all accepted a more common-sense view of divorce, could possibly have held that the Princess had to choose between marriage and her royal status. No wonder that the serious upshot of the whole affair in Parliament and the country is a demand for Disestablishment.



24 NOVEMBER, 1956

IT is a sign of the times that so great a figure of the thirties as Dr. Juan Negrin should die with so little notice and so little controversy in this country. He was a big, I think a great, man, able, humane and brave; a distinguished scientist and a moderate Socialist, he went into politics only when Spain needed him. He became prime minister because he was the one politician able to do the job. He disliked his dependence on the Soviet Union and the Communist Party, but had no other effective allies. The British and French refused him even the normal aid legally due to a government. The Communists were powerful in Spain only because the democracies were appeasing the Fascists. Later I saw him from time to time in England during the World War, when he was co-operating with the British Government, and occasionally in Paris. But I best remember him on two visits to Spain during the darkest days of Spain and my most vivid memory is an evening in Christmas week 1938, when we could hear Franco's approaching guns. I said: "At last the British Tory Party are coming round; even Winston Churchill now sees that your victory in Spain is important for building the alliance against

Hitler." (Churchill had just changed his views about Spain.) Negrin replied, in a matter-of-fact voice: "Too late." He was right: Barcelona fell soon afterwards.

1 DECEMBER, 1956

My friend Jones was challenged by an acquaintance the other day: "Don't you think Anthony is really wonderful?" He replied that on the contrary he thought the Premier a national disaster. She said (I quote her actual words), "You are a Communist and a Fascist and a traitor and you ought to be locked up." These are the ravings of a single hysterical woman? Yes, but such hysteria is infectious and spreading. I have seen such epidemics before, and always for the same reason. All parties are based on instinct, but the Tories rely less than others on facts and arguments. Their party therefore splits less often. When facts and arguments are unanswerable, they close their ranks and stand behind their leader even if he is leading them to hell. In psychoanalytic terms they are putting up a defence against their own inner drive towards patricide. The external result is to make them regard all those who dare to attack the leader as traitors.

Does that mean that argument is useless? With the real hysterics who cannot admit even to themselves that it is their leader who has blocked the Canal, built up Nasser, divided the Commonwealth, alienated America and cut off our vital oil supplies, the answer must be yes. In the last resort I suspect, too, that even romantic patriots like Julian Amery and Right-wing intellectuals like Angus Maude (who last week declared that "the party would be rent by a massive revolt" if its leaders obeyed the United Nations) would vote for the party rather than split. But how long can the other, less vocal, group of dissidents—men like Walter Elliot and Lionel Heald—stand the present humiliation and the untruths told in their name? There are many loyal Tories who do not think that Tory unity comes before *everything else*. They share the sense of national shame that affects so many of us.

The other factor that undermines Tory unity is that Sir Anthony in Jamaica is having "extra trunk lines installed into his bungalow" thus, as the *Daily Telegraph* says, missing "the complete relaxation" his doctors have ordered, and keeping in "fitful touch with Lon

don", which is not "fair to his colleagues in London—or, indeed, to the country". Those who prefer more savage phraseology can usually depend on Randolph Churchill, the rogue elephant of the Tories. In a letter printed in Tuesday's *Manchester Guardian* he compared Eden's generalship with Hitler's conduct in leading his troops to Stalingrad and leaving them there. The sentence with which he ended his letter will not, I think, ever be forgotten or forgiven. "But Hitler, with all his faults, did not winter in Jamaica."

Part Four

BLOOMSBURY AND THE VILLAGE OF CHARING CROSS

25 MARCH, 1933

I HAVE often heard it said that the sense of parochialism has died out more completely in London than in any other city. This is true only in the sense that we Londoners, if we belong to the bourgeoisie, in nine cases out of ten do not know our neighbours, whether on the left or the right. But if you get out of these higher and duller circles, you will be surprised to find in almost any district of London that there is very definitely a local life and that the neighbourhood is a geographical and social unit, often with great traditions going back for centuries. You may not know the names even of your two next-door neighbours, but if you will cultivate the acquaintance of the old lady who sells newspapers at the corner of the street, you will find that she not only knows their names, but everything about them and about you, too. If you have lived long enough in the neighbourhood to be accepted by her as an inhabitant and one of her friends, she will tell you some surprising stories of the communal life, including the iniquities of the policeman, and you will discover that she and many others regard the neighbourhood precisely as the villager regards his village. Indeed, there is a part of Westminster in which Westminster is still known to its inhabitants as "the village". And there is a street of small shops there in which you will find people selling certain articles, like ropes, which their ancestors were selling in the same place in the time of the Stuarts. It was, I think, in the same street that the cow lived which its owner had the right to drive every day to St. James's Park, selling her milk there—a custom which the great war destroyed with so many other pleasant things. One friend of mine recalls that, as a child, he was several times taken by his father to buy a glass of milk from the old woman who had had the right to milk her cow there ever since the time of Charles II.

There are, I believe, still residents in Westminster who remember seeing their ancestors' bones dug up and removed from the plot of ground in front of Westminster Abbey. I share their regret at the disappearance of these local memorials. Inside the Abbey the Dean has begun to remove some of the statues. I hope that steps can be taken to restrain his reforming energies. There is nothing, I think, of any great aesthetic value inside the Abbey, but nearly everything

there is of historic interest and the general effect of higgledy-piggledy antiquity is charming and highly characteristic of "the village" of Westminster and of England herself. It is lamentable that the Dean should have the power and will to remove these monuments. He has stated that his reason for doing so is to make room for worshippers. Clearly he misconceives the primary purpose of the building in his charge, which is not a place for worshippers, but for English history and the burial of those whom each generation—often mistakenly—has decided to honour. There are innumerable other churches in London with ample room for worshippers; Westminster Abbey must be reserved for the dead and their monuments.



25 FEBRUARY, 1933

THE *Daily Telegraph* describes the way in which "an exclusive West-end house" belonging to one of our leading Society hostesses ("a hostess on many occasions to the Royal Family") is being transformed one day this week "into a miniature railway station" for what "will be perhaps the most spectacular make-believe party ever staged even in Mayfair. All the station noises, including whistling and shunting, will be reproduced into the lofty ivory and gold ballroom; there will be a real ticket collector in real uniform, whose first experience it will be of a Mayfair party." He will punch the tickets of the titled guests—the long list looks well in a gossip column—and they will be shown into a room got up to look just like a station waiting-room—even down to the ashtrays. "Even the waiters are being lent by the railways to ensure the right 'atmosphere'." As I read this account I was irresistibly reminded of certain fêtes which occurred at Trianon in the time of Marie Antoinette. Do you remember the real cows and the real milkmaids and all the other efforts of the *ancien régime* aristocracy to make believe that their life was real? But that was of course a long time ago—a few years before the French Revolution.



19 AUGUST, 1933

MRS. BARCLAY'S article on moneylenders last week has inspired a correspondent to send me some very remarkable stories from his own experience. The first concerns a Bermondsey widow who used to live in one of those unexpectedly prosperous houses which, as

Mrs. Barclay said, often point to the moneylender in a slum street. Mrs. Jackson's house was expensively decorated, the woodwork grained and heavily varnished in the best public-house manner. This lady always vowed that she had only just enough to scrape along herself, but she knew a "friend" who had done a lot for the poor and might be prevailed upon to oblige again. The friend was obliging enough only to charge a penny in the shilling per week and, thus covered with disinterestedness, Mrs. Jackson was more easily able to insist that she would never allow a borrower to betray her friend's trust by getting behind with the interest payment. Old Logan was another moneylender, a pious-looking old devil with a queenly-looking wife and two tall, high-collared and haughty daughters. My correspondent writes: "I can see now the heavily furnished room, half office and half drawing-room, in which the old spider would encompass the poor borrowing fly who came back time after time to leave a little more blood behind him. Logan's terms were two shillings in the pound per week—about 500 per cent per annum. Every Sunday morning I used to see the Logan family carrying their Bibles as they processed with dignity and aloofness to their reserved pew in church." The last case is a recent and surely unusual one. A jeweller-pawnbroker related that regularly every week for eight or nine years a compositor called to pledge a gold watch-chain and with equal regularity redeemed it on Saturdays. At last the pawnbroker asked his client why, seeing that he did not seem hard up, he always carried out this odd transaction. The compositor explained that by pawning the chain he always had some cash about him, whereas many of his fellow-workers had none. Consequently he was frequently asked to help out with small sums and at last decided to make a business of it. He got three pounds a week for the chain and by lending it out in five- or ten-shilling sums at a penny in the shilling per week he had for all these years made out of this valuable article a hundred pounds per annum in interest, less a few pence a week to the pawnbroker!

The N.S. was housed at 10 Great Queen Street until 1934

2 JUNE, 1934

THE Connaught Rooms stand opposite this office. On Tuesday evening there were great goings-on. From my window I watched

the arrival of the police; I saw them efficiently guiding the long stream of Rolls-Royces and Daimlers which decanted their illustrious freight, white-waistcoated and bemedalled, on to the red carpet which proclaimed the importance of the occasion. The place was full of police; they stood near the doors, at intervals along the pavements, in the fairway and at the ends of the street. Ordinary cars were discreetly deflected down side-ways. My own ancient car, parked outside the office, looked so shabby that I feared a prosecution for *lèse majesté*. Who is expected? "Yes," someone whispered, "it is ——. He is coming Himself." A hush descended on the street. It was empty but for the police and small knots of people gaping on the pavement. All the cars had come and gone: everyone had arrived. We waited silently for the Arrival. The only person moving was an artisan walking home from work. Suddenly the silence was shattered. A cheerful voice from the crowd hailed the solitary walker. "I say, Bill, they must have known you were coming this way." Someone laughed loudly; smiles rippled round; the tension was broken; the police kept their faces with an effort. It is good to see a small pebble of humour dropped into the ornamental pool of snobbery.



11 MAY, 1935

THE most hard-boiled critics have been pleasantly surprised by the Silver Jubilee celebrations. Thanking God that we are not as other men has for a long while been a national hobby, but the temper of the prodigious London crowd really did make one feel fortunate in having been born a British subject. There were, of course, a certain number of drunks—in Covent Garden I saw a few belated revellers at nine in the morning, reeling. But the drunks were just as amiable as the sober. Already on Saturday night the West End was packed with a people ravenous for gaiety: it was heavenly to watch enjoyment on so immense a scale. I got, indeed, the impression that the occasion was answering an acute need—the crowd devoured the colour and the music and the pageantry and the bright lights like starving men falling upon food. It is seventeen years since London's last Bacchanalia, far too long a time. The autocrats have learnt that men require collective rejoicings, and it is essential that the demo-

cracies bestow upon themselves the same opportunities for pleasure. It is notorious that Louis Napoleon became an Emperor because under a constitutional monarchy France was bored.

11 MAY, 1935

THE final scene for me was the Bacchanalia in Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly Circus around midnight. The plinth of the Nelson Column was packed with people singing; and though most of them were too young to remember the war, the songs they sang were "Tipperary", "There's a Long, Long Trail Awinding", and "Keep the Home Fires Burning". But the Piccadilly Eros provided, as it were, the Omphalos of these nocturnal rites. Round it there were dancing, singing, confetti, lamp-post climbing, and a whole riotous carnival in which Colonel Blimps in white ties were caught up with costermongers and their donahs. The next day we returned to reality, unemployment, menaces of war. But I am left with a strengthened impression of a people which values and deserves its liberty, and which will not easily submit to the autocracy of any of its sections.

18 MAY, 1935

IT was on the Saturday night that the Jubilatory excitement reached its most delirious point. Though it is now difficult to distinguish by their clothes the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, the crowd which seethed through the West End certainly contained a far larger proportion of small wage-earners than it had on the previous evenings. The invaders turned Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus and Regent Street into ballrooms; they perched themselves on the running-boards and luggage-carriers of every private car which tried to nose its way through them, and outside the Piccadilly Hotel they were calling obstinately for the dance band which plays there to come out and play for them: "We want Sidney Kite, we want Sidney Kite!" Mounted police, who were controlling the situation with remarkable tact, found themselves slightly embarrassed when the crowd, instead of dispersing in front of them, insisted upon patting

their horses. It was like a dream revolution, a revolution in a film by René Clair. Of course Providence, if one believes a number of witnesses, had also been behaving in a most patriotic way. One clergyman has declared that the explanation of the fine weather—why it should need special explanation I don't know—is that so many thousands of people had prayed for it. The final word on the whole business lies perhaps with a banner on an East End slum dwelling—"Lousy, but Loyal."



24 AUGUST, 1935

IN London lately I fancy I have detected a more adventurous spirit among beggars and entertainers. One enterprising party travels about in a taxi with a set of bells and a piano and I know of a street pianist who collects children round him like the pied piper and gets them singing popular songs more or less in unison. In Oxford Street the more pushful match seller no longer stands with his back to the wall but at right angles to it in order to catch the flow of pedestrians as it passes. Among pavement artists there has been a break with the crayon tradition, though I know of one original fellow in Hampstead who has discarded the usual appeal on behalf of a sick wife and ten children, and has a notice bearing the far more sinister words "Gastric and duodenal pains". This man always has a topical drawing with a striking inscription. The other day an Abyssinian was depicted in lilac and orange saying, "Why should we be civilized? Are you?" On another occasion he had a fierce reference to the Hampstead dog nuisance: "Worship God not animals." Or was this a reference to his competitor up the street who plays a gramophone and has a fox terrier to collect the money from dog-loving ladies? This dog is evidently an important asset, for one day, when the dog was not with him, the man had propped a notice on his gramophone, bearing the immortal words "Dog indisposed".



7 SEPTEMBER, 1935

I HAVE been thinking about speed. Speed on the road may be governed ultimately by the law, but is actually determined by pro-

fessional tradition and etiquette. No one ever met a butcher's pony going at less than a canter in the old days, or a fast milk cart. Today speed is the trade prerogative of the newspaper van and the mail van, and would be altogether indecent in a hearse. So at least I thought until I saw this week a hearse doing a smooth 45 up a London street. An old gentleman crossing the road had the same delusion and the hearse (which contained a coffin and the usual top-hatted mutes) pulled up squealing only just in time. At which another breach of professional etiquette occurred. The four undertakers, hitherto grave in the hearse-side manner, suddenly showed their teeth and laughed with the peculiarly sardonic laughter of undertakers, a laughter all the more disturbing since they were on duty and had so narrowly escaped another job of work. Passers-by laughed too. Very gaily. I reflected that many people would like their death to be the occasion of gaiety in others. The old gentleman who had escaped, however, was very angry.

12 OCTOBER, 1935

THE scene was in the middle of the Italian quarter in Soho. An urchin was selling evening papers and holding a poster: "Italy Bombs Women and Children." A passer-by bought a paper and said: "Aren't you afraid of showing that poster here?" The small boy's reply has unfortunately to be bowdlerized. "Me scared? I don't care a damn for them wops!"

16 NOVEMBER, 1935

A CORRESPONDENT writes to tell me that he has discovered that during the nude scenes in the revue at the Windmill Theatre one is not allowed to use opera glasses.

15 MAY, 1937

FROM my point of view—an elevated but not conspicuous one about halfway along the south side of the Mall—the Coronation procession

was divided into two very distinct parts. The first was pure *Alice in Wonderland*—I enjoyed it exactly as I enjoyed my first pantomime and my first circus. Here was a world of make-believe incredibly and fantastically come to life. The Beefeaters, the King's Barge-master and twelve Watermen, the Arabian Nights Aides-de-camp, and then the vast fairy coach with its comic gilt Titans and gingerbread horses and gorgeous postilions, and the King and Queen inside, looking quite unreal, but very nice, like splendid dolls. This was true Fairyland. The only figure missing was Prince Charming.

The arrangements seemed to me admirable. I got to my seat about 6 a.m.; two hours later would have done just as well. But it was great fun walking through St. James's in the early morning. There were gleams of sun; miraculous tulips standing in mass formation, so straight and brilliant that they might have been trying to put the Guards to shame. And then the scarlet Guards themselves, resting with their busbies parked in rows on the muzzles of their rifles. All very informal; coffee to be had and hot dogs. And then as diversion men up plane trees. Two, perched only just off the route, are spotted by a group of mounted police chiefs and Guards officers. They are told to come down. But with an admirable sense of realities they have their backs to the Mall and are reading newspapers. Nothing disturbs them, not the voices of the police nor the delighted cheers and laughter of the crowd. At last the police have the sense to laugh too; they can do nothing without a scene, a hose-pipe and much unpopularity. They pass along and everyone claps. A democratic incident I would have liked Goebbels to see. The progress of the coaches to Westminster with their blue and pink and yellow liveries, the cars of the Foreign Potentates which pass quickly—perhaps wisely, for Blomberg is in one and Litvinov in another—and the six Prime Ministers (there is Mr. Baldwin—the real architect of today's proceedings), and then the Royal procession —all this is such fun that I forgot that the Coronation may be more than a pantomime. But the second procession—of troops on their way to join the main procession after the Abbey service—brings me to earth again. Troops of many colours from all over the world, with the light catching their bayonets all the way from the Admiralty Arch to Buckingham Palace. A small boy behind me recites their nationalities to his mother as they pass. And then, suddenly, as the gorgeous Indian cavalry rides by, he says, "Oh, Mummy, *haven't* we got an Empire!"

17 APRIL, 1937

A RECENT picture in the *Daily Express* showed that:

> The chimpanzees at Whipsnade now have Coronation mugs at their tea parties and wave the Union Jack with enthusiasm.

But wandering through the Zoo the other day, I heard someone remark that the mandrills had got in first with their patriotic display.

10 JULY, 1937

THE other night after a show I was given a drink at Claridge's. The hall was full of girls and boys strolling and sitting out in the intervals of a Deb ball. The current Victorian vogue was very conspicuous in the clothes of most of the girls. What a difference, I was thinking, from the Bright Young People when I was a young man in the Roaring Twenties! At that moment a particularly demure-looking girl came along wearing a crinoline, with a wreath of rosebuds on her head and her hair in ringlets. As she passed me, "My God," she said to her partner, "My God, my mother is a swine!"

23 JULY, 1938

WHY don't more people do it? he asked. Really I could not tell him. What puzzled me was my own blindness. I have walked past that dull corner of a slummy street every day for the last four years and not looked over those area palings before. And yet there it was, a hundred yards from my own front door—a hanging garden, like Babylon, he explained: 130 flower-pots hanging from wires with fuchsias in full bloom and nasturtiums and phlox and lavender and creeping jenny and mint (to eat with peas) and thyme in a thick cluster and a fine blue larkspur, not looking as if it at all minded being below floor-level, and lobelias and geraniums and a host of other flowers fresh and flourishing. "We get quite a lot of sun on

this corner," he said, "and I water them every night. It takes three or four hours. I work in the City—it's a mistake to think that everyone who works in the City is well-to-do. You see, it is no good pouring water on to the top of the pots because it drains through much too fast, so I have to take every pot down and stand it for ten minutes in that old bath-tub there. Keeping the soil nourished is a bit of a problem, but I manage it with some manure from the road and a bit of lime, and last year I had the good idea of giving them a dose of sprats, cut up fine. That larkspur must have had a special sprat to itself, I think." And then to my surprise he began to curse the "Reds" because they threatened property and frightened business away from the City. I told him that I too believed in property, especially in the right to enjoy the flowers you grew yourself and that my trouble was that in the present order so few of us had gardens to enjoy. Soon he was talking the most preposterous stuff about current politics, and I could not bear it and steered him back again to gardens. That's the dodge to make life bearable. Get people to talk about their own subject. With farmers discuss pigs, with business men stick to business (if you don't play golf), with teachers talk about children, with stockbrokers about scandal, with politicians about their colleagues, and with gardeners—oh, most particularly with gardeners!—keep the conversation to insect pests, the mysterious properties of the soil and the folly of people who do not grow flowers.



18 JANUARY, 1941

I MET James Joyce once and that was in the dark. In the physical sense my impression of him is indistinct. About his personality I had the most definite and curious impression—one which I cannot hope to convey. It was like this. Robert and Sylvia Lynd gave a party one summer night in 1931; we strolled and talked in their garden in Keats Grove by lantern light. Joyce was the guest of the evening. He was standing in a corner in the deep shadow when I was introduced to him. I could see nothing except a dark suit and the outline of large spectacles. He began talking volubly about a singer named Sullivan, who had been recently banned in England. His words poured out indignantly. Sullivan was the greatest living singer. People talked of singing *Otello*. In *Otello* there were so

many G's in alt and so many lower C's. This was nothing. Sullivan could sing *Guillaume Tell*, which needed a far greater reach; in that part there were some hundreds of G's in alt and even more lower C's. He reeled off figures and suddenly stopped. He'd forgotten how many. He was thoroughly annoyed and there in the blackness he began to feel in his pockets for a piece of paper on which, it seemed, all these musical statistics were written down. His annoyance had something grotesque about it. No one minded in the least how many top G's there were. Even if the figures were written down in such large writing that he could read it, it was far too dark to see anything. But clearly he felt that he had failed in some way; the figures which must have taken hours to work out from the two parts were of great importance to him. He was like a collector who has lost an unusual piece that spoils the set. I suggested that he might write for *The New Statesman and Nation* about Sullivan. Eventually, after some correspondence, he agreed, not to write an article direct for the paper, but to publish a letter to his favourite singer. I believe that in fact he never wrote for any periodical. We got over the difficulty by publishing his article with an editorial note explaining that it was a letter written to Mr. Sullivan after an occasion on which he had been carried through the streets of Marseilles in celebration of his performance of *Guillaume Tell.* The article finally appeared in *The New Statesman and Nation* on February 27th, 1932. It is full of enthusiasm, strange expressions, obscure references and private jokes. It ends up "Send him canorious, long to lung over us, high topseasoarious! Guard safe our Geoge!"

POST-WAR

8 SEPTEMBER, 1945

THE war is really over, but no one here feels inclined to revive the forced gaiety of Victory celebration. I had, I admit, one exciting moment when, pushing my way through packed Piccadilly and evading exploding firecrackers as best I could, I found Ed Murrow broadcasting to the United States on the pavement outside the Criterion. He hung on like gay death to a microphone at the end of wires falling from a first-storey window, and he kept up a good-natured chatter while the crowd swept him sometimes back against the wall and sometimes halfway to the Eros statue. He threw the

microphone to me and I found myself talking to some unknown millions in the United States with absolutely nothing to say except that people seemed to be enjoying themselves.

The only other V-day incident that I shall recall with much pleasure occurred in a tiny village in Essex last Saturday. It was decided that the children of the village, numbering something between forty and fifty in all, should be given a treat. Practically everyone in the village made cakes or jam sandwiches or helped in some way. Then as a surprise there was an ice-cream for every child, and a beaker with a Donald Duck picture on it. Just as tea began an R.A.F. sergeant from an aerodrome near by got off his bike, pushed a pound note into our hands and rode off again. The till of the village pub was ransacked for change and the pound note changed into forty sixpences, one in each beaker. Then the children rampaged into my garden and carried away all the windfall apples. They demanded a ride in my car and I drove them up and down in relays while they sang at the top of their voices, "You Are My Sunshine". Our village had the right idea, and V-day is like Christmas—it is a celebration for children.



15 JUNE, 1946

THE fireworks were terrific, and seeing the Thames on fire was the sight of a lifetime. The crowd vastly enjoyed it, and Westminster will not be passable at night as long as the floodlit fairyland continues. The exquisite coloured fountains of St. James's Park should be a permanent national institution. The truth is that the British love fiestas as much as any people, in spite of their reputation for phlegm, and they get too few of them. Fireworks should be repeated more often. If we think of the number of people who enjoyed them, each one of whom would have happily paid 6d., the spectacle is remarkably cheap. They enjoyed the procession too, particularly cheering the miners and civilian war workers, who proved almost as popular as the King and Queen and Monty. When the rain poured down the draggled merrymakers ate their sodden sandwiches, huddled in doorways and under arches. They grumbled surprisingly little; they had a grand outing which had nothing much to do with Victory; many of those who enjoyed it had cursed the whole idea before they came. As a wise child unanswerably put it, "You wouldn't have missed it for worlds, if you'd seen it."

30 MARCH, 1946

FOR the first time for years I listened on a recent Sunday afternoon to the Marble Arch orators. They seemed to me not up to the old standard; at least, I heard no speaker comparable to the superb actor, whose name I forget, who used to explain, amid torrents of laughter, just how the gold standard really worked. The biggest crowds last Sunday were gathered round an Irishman describing the rule of the Ulster Gestapo and the Indian who spoke from the platform of the Revolutionary Communist Party. This party is regarded as Trotskyite by Stalinists, but I wonder whether in the conditions of India today the two may not once more join forces. One never knows. Near by a tightly packed group argued with a sharp-tongued Salvation lass and a larger crowd found it funny to be told by an earnest preacher that by listening to him and failing to accept the word of God they were every moment stoking up for themselves hotter fires in hell than would be theirs if they stayed away in pagan ignorance. A handsome gentleman representing the Society for the Evangelicizing of London (I think I've got the title right) was spreading the gospel to three listeners, but a considerable crowd was carrying on a lively argument with the expositor of Catholic Evidence. Another religious speaker was telling Atheists that they were cowardly not to anticipate the missionaries in converting the heathen to Atheism. Some soldiers were ruffled by an orator who kept repeating that no one could make a man fight if he didn't want to. The only other stands I recall belonged to the anarchists. One of them spoke to three people and the other, while I watched, to no one at all. Americans, who often find Hyde Park oratory an impressive institution, might gather, correctly I think, that the London public nowadays has no particular grudge against the State and, profoundly irreligious itself, regards religion as the ideal subject for good-tempered argument.

11 MAY, 1946

JEREMY is a marmalade cat, about seven months old. He escaped the other day from his home not far from Charing Cross. We were out

and did not discover our loss until eleven o'clock at night. First I sought him in the Embankment Gardens, feeling somewhat foolish as I called in the dark, disturbing the privacy and comfort of courting couples. Then I recalled that Jeremy is a very companionable beast who likes people rather than scenery. The pubs, of course, were shut and London seemed very large and ill-signposted for erring cats. First I tried Charing Cross Underground without success. Wandering disconsolately up Villiers Street I next called at the Players Theatre on the off-chance. Yes, they had all seen Jeremy. He'd been there, making friends with everyone. Unfortunately he had refused to stay and had left no address. Hot on the trail, I tried the next inhabited place, Charing Cross Station. "Oh, yes," said the ticket collector at the first platform, "your cat was here ten minutes ago. Can't say which way he went." The Charing Cross Hotel? Yes, they'd seen him half an hour since. Lyons Corner House, however, had not. Charing Cross Station remained the best bet. The police constable on duty for the night was most friendly and sympathetic. He introduced me to the station cat and told me the history of her last kittens. We explored the deserted platforms, especially one where a cargo of fish had left an appetizing smell. We even searched the ladies' lavatory, my first, and probably last, time to enter that mysterious territory. Finally, with the station shutting at one o'clock, we instructed the remaining porters to keep a look-out. I left my telephone number, and went home to bed. Sure enough at a little before six in the morning the telephone hooked me from my bed like a minnow; the police had my cat. Half an hour later we celebrated Jeremy's homecoming in an early morning cup of tea.

Such an incident has a peculiar spice in London, because one discovers that its vast impersonal hullabaloo is after all only a disguise for a collection of human beings each living in his own village, which has somehow got jammed up against a lot of other villages. Charing Cross will never again seem to me a strange or menacing place or a mere port of call from which one wants to get away as soon as possible. I am on close personal terms with the presiding constable and the official cat. Obviously, if one had the time and patience, one could spend every night as advantageously as Haroun Al-Raschid. No end to surprise, if one is not in a hurry, not bent on one's private concerns. For instance, when I told the story of Jeremy at lunch the other day it was capped by a distinguished scientist. In

company with a well-known medical specialist not long ago, he was hoping to catch a bus or find a late taxi in a deserted street. Suddenly a clink of falling coins sounded on the sidewalk near them. No one was in sight. They searched, and to their astonishment found 16s. 6d. My friend was for regarding the find as treasure trove, but the medical knight was more scrupulous and created a stir in an adjacent pub by calling for silence and asking if anyone had discarded 16s. 6d. Surprisingly, no one put in a claim. My friend and his companion were moving off down the road when a quite attractive, if rather overdressed, young woman (I quote my friend's description) emerged from further down the side-street and asked if anyone had by any chance found any money. Explanation given: "My—er—husband threw it away . . . you see we had words just as we were going in . . ." (The husband, my friend remarks, must have been a powerful thrower.) Clearly much remained unsaid and how much remained for the imagination to play upon!



8 JUNE, 1946

LIFE is never dull in the village of Charing Cross. Only a year ago a man was murdered in Villiers Street, and a few weeks ago I traced Jeremy to Charing Cross Station. This week an even more unlikely event occurred. I was awoken by the police at 5.30 in the morning with the information that somebody had been trying to steal my car, which had been left outside the house. It says a lot for discipline that they kept their faces straight. Mine is not the kind of car that you would expect anyone to steal. It hasn't any front, and birds build under the eaves, using apparently some of the upholstery to line their nests. However, the police had caught a man trying to open the door and I had to go to Bow Street to give evidence that I had authorized no such proceeding. Waiting, I heard the usual string of prostitutes pleading guilty and paying their fines with cheerful condescension. (There is a mystery here; why are these particular girls chosen from so many?) Then there were the drunk and disorderlies and a man charged with begging who continuously interrupted the magistrate to explain that he could not help it. At last came my constable's turn. But he failed to convince the magistrate that the man who tried the handle of my car was trying to steal

it. If the magistrate had seen the car, standing outside the police station, I feel sure he would have dismissed the case even more summarily.

9 NOVEMBER, 1946

OUR post-war processions in London have, up to now, been dreary, languid, political trudges through the wet; even our queues have been less dismal. But on Guy Fawkes' Night it was different. Laughing and singing and shouting their delightful slogans, the students marched down to Piccadilly with banners bearing the words, "Put Eros back" and "A Home Fit for Eros". There has been nothing as gay in London since the victory days. Half the pleasure was in the sight of young people; they seemed to have emerged suddenly, and at last, from the war. The other half was in one's assent to their cause. Of course, put Eros back. Take down that disgusting and slothful heap of poster-daubed boards in Piccadilly, which seems to have become the symbol of the apathy, anxiety and disheartened resignation which the foreign visitor notices when he comes to London now. If we had to have those shabby boards in the middle of Piccadilly Circus, we might at least have had good posters on them. But why have the boards at all? For once, a students' "rag" had sense in it.

21 DECEMBER, 1946

EVERY year on Christmas Eve, English children go to bed optimistically hoping that Christmas will live up to its white reputation. Perhaps this year the village of Charing Cross will really be transformed into an urban version of Dingley Dell; perhaps we can turn the statue of Charles I into a snowman? Statistically it is unlikely; grey London mist would be more usual. Indeed, though we can all recall odd years when snow has fallen at Christmas-time—you remember the sparkling icicles of Christmas, 1944?—the truth is that a white Christmas is largely a Dickens's myth. A friend who has gone over the meteorological records of Dickens's time declares that Dickens himself can only have twice experienced snow at Christmas;

the first time was in his impressionable childhood and the second (the origin of Dingley Dell) was the same Christmas which Washington Irving also enshrined as a typically English Yuletide. For the rest, our Christmas-card Christmases are mainly a Continental import brought in, like the Christmas-tree, by Albert the Good, complete with German snow.



21 DECEMBER, 1946

I COULDN'T help laughing as I caught sight of my feet on the pavement. No one else saw the joke, for the citizens of Charing Cross are mostly too busy to notice anything odd about another citizen's feet. The fact was that I'd come out wearing a Canadian shoe of the single-piece kind on one foot and an English utility shoe with a round toe-cap on the other. I supposed I should have to go back and change. And then the notion came to me that this was quite silly. What did it matter to me or anyone else if my shoes were odd? Surely the convention is more odd than the shoes. No one is a penny the worse for my wearing shoes of different patterns. Nor, aesthetically, can I see any benefit in uniformity in such a matter. I walked on with my head up. I don't know how we ever came to be such sticklers for the dull fashion by which one's socks have to match, nor, if I am pressed, do I see why a citizen should be embarrassed if he wears parti-coloured clothes and makes a serviceable pair of trousers with one leg from his blue suit and the other from the brown. Logic and common sense seem on my side; and yet I shuffled my feet a bit when I saw that the man opposite me in the Underground was regarding my shoes with a puzzled, injured expression.



12 APRIL, 1947

EVERYBODY looked properly happy at Hampstead on Monday, in spite of a gale which was stripping the awnings from the sideshows and the puddles of liquid mud round the switchbacks. All the traditional figures were there. Young 'Enry, bawling his head off after getting a cuff on the ear for spoiling his clean sailor suit. George, who has sold cockles at the fair every Easter Monday for thirty years. Gipsy Lee—"a hundred and fifty pounds if not the original"—patronized as always by the best families in England.

Harry, who makes a profit of about 800 per cent selling glasses of lemonade. Then, of course, the ladies and gentlemen in the booths with the posters that become more suggestive of pornography each year with less reason. I noticed the longest queue of children at a tent advertising a "Japanese Torture Chamber" and a "sexational" strip-tease dancer. The torture was nothing more than a variant on the old trick of sawing a woman in half. The dancer neither stripped nor teased. The small boys in front sent up a disapproving cry as the curtain fell. "Disappointed?" said a managerial voice from stage. "What d'you expect for a tanner?"

10 MAY, 1947

IT is amusing to meet Americans during their first few days in England, as they try to match the facts of our lives against the stories of their press. Apparently it is not too easy. One American I met last week was frankly amazed at our failure to realize the straits we were in. "According to the papers back home," he said, "your standard of living has sunk so low under Socialism that your Peers are practically chewing the ermine on their gowns. I admit your food is bad, but then I've visited Britain before the war." I suggested, however, that London did look rather shabby, which my American guest could hardly deny, "but according to our papers your houses aren't just shabby, they've all fallen down". He also complained that the British people, owing to some lamentable oversight, had apparently never been informed that the British Empire had been liquidated and Britain could not therefore hope to exist as an independent country much longer. It is going to be hard for us in Britain this summer to decide just what sort of Britain we do show to the Americans—do we have them to dinner the night we eat the meat ration or the night we have bread and cheese? Do we give them weak beer at the local or strong drink at the Ritz? Perhaps the Tourist board can tell us: are we proud or are we poor?

24 MAY, 1947

EVEN in big cities nature is not easily ousted. Birds, animals and plants all filter through the stone defences. From my window in

Holborn I can watch willow-wrens, and outside on a bombed site at the corner of Great Turnstile and Holborn, where wild flowers now grow, a pair of mallards appear to have settled down comfortably despite the noise and lack of privacy. I leave it to experts to discuss the powers of observation needed to spot, from a height, such a tiny surface of water and the navigational instinct which enables a bird to return to it. More surprising to me was to hear that a fox recently made its way, not for the first time, into a Highgate garden. The attraction was chickens. Alas for the fox, the gardener was what M'Turk called "a man not fit to live in the same country with a god-fearing fox". He used a gun.

30 AUGUST, 1947

"If your little girl preached the gospel, what would you do?" Mr. Martz asked the audience at the Albert Hall on Sunday. What Mr. Martz usually does is to advertise the meeting well in advance to ensure a good collection. This time there had been a slip-up, and when little Renée tripped on to the platform with her doll and two pink flowers in her hair, there were only seven hundred to welcome her. Not that the seven hundred were unappreciative. They stood and clapped their hands while they sang "The Blood of the Lamb" and other favourite revivalist hymns, although they showed a marked lack of interest in Mr. Martz's plea for £200 to cover the hire of the hall and "a few pounds for the hotel bill". Renée is an accomplished show-girl for a seven-year-old. Singing her first song, she saw out of the corner of her eye a photographer crawling towards her from the side of the platform. Instantly she threw up her hands in a motion of ecstasy, and the magnesium flared to make the perfect picture. She is a highly intelligent child with a fluent prattle, which at times reached hysteria point as her father from behind shouted "Hallelujah!" or an elderly grinning clergyman, also on the platform, yelled, "Bless her!" What she said in her twenty-five minutes' sermon was mostly lost through poor acoustics, but at intervals she could be heard demanding a revival for the churches, the preachers, the world, London, daddy and herself. To encourage daddy she had previously informed the meeting, mostly middle-aged women and small children, that she had told him she didn't mind there not being a large audience. She would preach to them just the same. At the

end Mr. Martz put his hands round his daughter's bowed head and prayed that God would put some sense into his head, enabling him to avoid future financial flops, to which some members of the audience said amen. All harmless enough, I suppose—that is, for the audience and the parents. But one wonders what Renée will have to say to daddy when she grows up.



6 SEPTEMBER, 1947

IF you are content with an inexpensive holiday, reading or dozing in a deck-chair with the sun on your face, flowers round you and sparkling water only a hundred yards away, you need go no farther than the village of Charing Cross. All these amenities, including a band twice a day, are to be found in the Embankment Gardens. Every modern convenience is supplied; there are plenty of unrationed meals at all prices in the vicinity, and you will find more historic monuments within reach than in any other holiday resort I know. To your right is Westminster; to your left St. Paul's. If you are interested in pictures, you have the choice between the Tivoli and the National Gallery. You can even join the Players if you want a performance in which you can play a part. You can watch the barges and the tugs pass slowly by, and, as the trains rumble over Charing Cross Bridge, have the vicarious pleasure of imaginative travel in a hot and crowded train while you yourself remain coolly at ease. If you are tired of the band, you can wander down the gardens and enjoy the colossal statue of Robert Burns, the weeping woman who laments the death of W. S. Gilbert, the solid figures of Robert Raikes, who founded Sunday-schools, the bearded Sir Wilfrid Lawson, temperance reformer, General Gordon on his camel and the beautiful little water garden that was laid out for some very important Field-Marshal whose name I never can call to mind.

When night falls and the band packs up, the crowd goes home. But not everyone. Down-and-outs stretch themselves on the benches. The police, who have important duties to perform at Fascist and anti-Fascist meetings, are a tolerant and kindly race; they do not disturb the sleepers or the lovers kissing in the shadows. Nor, I judge from the glowing cigarettes I can see from my windows, do they mind occasional convivial groups who sit on and talk far into the night. All this is tranquil and agreeable and as it should be.

There is one further facility, not provided as far as I know in any other holiday resort. The other night I was awakened about midnight by the sound of someone playing Beethoven, by no means badly. It was too late for the wireless, and I was puzzled. An hour or two later I woke again, and the music was played intermittently all night. At six o'clock, peering through the trees, I saw the solution to the mystery. A young man, who seemed not much in need of practice, was sitting in the deserted bandstand, quietly playing at the grand piano to a world in which, as far as I know, only I was attentive.

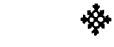


29 NOVEMBER, 1947

A FEW people have written to me that the Royal Wedding was an extravagant and ostentatious waste of money; and complained that the press over-sentimentalized an event which ought to have been settled quietly and privately. I wonder if my correspondents would have thought the same if they had been inside the Abbey. I should be insincere if I did not admit that I thoroughly and unashamedly enjoyed it. I confess that I went to the wedding as one might go to a circus or to watch the Lord Mayor's Show go by. I found myself moved and impressed from the moment that I started to drive through the vast patient crowds lining the Mall and Whitehall. They were truly crowds in the sense that they were no longer composed of individuals but had acquired a collective personality of their own. With whatever motive they had set out, they had become participants in an ancient ceremony, partly symbolic and partly religious. It was no doubt because my head was full of thoughts like these that I nearly failed altogether to find my place high above the Great West Door of the Abbey. The opening to the press gallery had no sign on it, and I plodded past it, on and on, up the spiral stone staircase, until a man ahead of me turned round and asked me if I was one of the bellringers.

I could not have had a better view of the seemingly endless processions of dignity, grace and colour that unfolded themselves below me. In the colour combinations I was most struck by the vestments of the clergy and the choristers, whose slow convolutions were executed with perfect artistry. Against this splendid background the service itself was admirably simple and effective. The fanfares of

trumpets, two of them especially composed by Sir Arnold Bax, were played from behind the altar and did exactly what trumpets should do—excited and at the same time stilled. I cannot swear whether the bride looked lovely or not; I was not near enough to see her face. But her dress did, and her entrance compelled an absolute quiet, even among the pressmen. The Royal guests all played their parts excellently, allowing themselves to be marshalled and led in processions like so many well-behaved Boy Scouts. The congregation were not quite so good. They got off to a false start by standing up for the procession of the Gentlemen-at-Arms, perhaps mistaking them for a procession of foreign Royalty or visiting clergy. Among the guests it was Mr. Churchill who stole the show. Like the others, including the Prime Minister, he should have been in his place by 10.45. Instead, he waited until all were seated, arriving immediately before the first of the Royal processions was due to start. Walking slowly up the whole length of the aisle, with Mrs. Churchill, he had a minor procession of his own, graciously acknowledging the salutes of the standing congregation on either side of him. It was not surprising that at such a show our greatest showman got one of the loudest cheers of the day.



27 MARCH, 1948

A NOTE of cheer in an otherwise gloomy world: on the first day of spring workmen began to remove the air-raid shelters from Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Postscript: Next day Sir John Anderson recommended new shelters against atomic bombs.



26 JUNE, 1948

IF you turn down Villiers Street from the Strand you pass on your left a narrow lane called, absurdly, York Place. A plaque informs you that it was formerly known as Of Alley, which was certainly the shortest street name in London. It was very silly to change it because Of Alley formed part of an historic whole. If you walk through York Place you will find yourself in the shattered remnant of George Court; you may then choose whether you want to pro-

ceed by way of Duke Street or Buckingham Street, which makes up in grand sum the splendid title of George Villiers, Duke Of Buckingham.

In any of these once aristocratic streets you will now see, early in the morning and late at night, young men and women carrying large and cumbersome parcels. They are artists bearing their works to and from the exhibition now being held, Paris fashion, in the Embankment Gardens. Go through the four-barred wooden gate that is, I hope, to remain as a permanent reminder of the fact that Charing Cross is only an overgrown village, ignore the band playing the most boring kind of music, pass between the colossal statue of Robert Burns on your left and the more modest tribute to the Camel Corps on your right, and you will find a crowd of eager and interested people. Many of them may never have looked at an original painting before; some of them find the more modern exhibits a bit hard on the eye. But there is something here to suit all tastes. Some artists stand by their work ready to discuss it; some of them modestly sit on benches near by and hope you will recognize them. The whole thing, as one painter put it to me, is "no end of a lark. The best thing the L.C.C. has ever done." Everyone is delighted about the annoyance caused to dealers, who want painting all to be on the snob level. There is too much darned democracy about this free-and-easy display, and no profits for anyone but the artist. No cliques here; no favouritism about hanging the pictures. You get the prepared screens if you are early; you clip your paintings on to the wire fence if you are late. The authorities were quite wrong in fearing that there would be a pitched battle between the realists and the surrealists. On the contrary, you find cheek by jowl some paintings that are highly accomplished, some obviously mere early flounderings, and some surprisingly original work in which young artists have been engaged during the war years. Anyway, there is more fun and real talk about painting on the Embankment than you are likely to get at Burlington House.



3 JULY, 1948

THE few strawberries left on the cart were 1s. 3d. a half-pound and looked a little squashy after their day in the open air. "I should have thought you'd have almost given them away at this time in the

evening," I said to the barrow boy. "We shouldn't be able to pay our expenses if we did that," he answered. "But you don't pay any rent for a shop." "No, but we have to pay the fines." For the first ten or eleven times, he and his mate told me, the magistrate usually only charges you ten shillings. Then it goes up to fifteen shillings and a pound. Allowing £3 10s. a week for fines, it is still more profitable than renting a shop front in an out-of-the-way district, or halting the barrow in one of the side-streets, where they are allowed. They didn't think the fines unfair. Of course, they got in the way of the traffic. If there were no fines, there would be thousands of barrow boys all over the place. The fines leave the field open to the toughest who know how to calculate the hazards. They are really the rent paid for desirable business locations. It seems an odd system. But their complaint was different. "But we are insulted all day long. Everyone tells us our stuff is no good. But they buy it just the same."



17 JULY, 1948

A BROOD of dabchicks has recently hatched out in the lake in the gardens of Buckingham Palace. This is a fact I should not have known if I had not attended Their Majesties' Garden Party last week. Buckingham Palace has hitherto seemed to me like the moon—a familiar façade, the back side of which is an object of curiosity not likely to be satisfied. Architectural curiosity therefore took me to Buckingham Palace once I had learned that I need not wear a hat, and that a lounge suit would do. After all, the brown suit I bought off a peg in San Francisco in 1945, a few days before the end of the war with Germany, still looks quite respectable when carefully pressed. No one knows that anything put in the pockets promptly falls to the ground. I found a vast assembly. Most, but not all the men, had grey toppers and black morning coats. A thick mass of people crowded round the buffet. "Almost like a cafeteria," said one gentleman in immaculate morning dress. "A crowd never seems the same," I said, "if the person you jostle is a peer of the realm." And we moved out carrying ices, coffee and chocolate cake. The rest of the crowd were gathered in thick circles, I presume round Royal personages who were quite invisible to me, though I caught sight of the Duchess of Gloucester's smile. How interesting it

would be to see her without a smile. I saw one man wearing a loud light-brown suit which made me feel very correct, and I had some conversation with a group of M.P.s and the members of the Burmese Embassy, who looked so much nicer than anybody else because their national costume is so naturally becoming. And then I wandered off round the grounds, and came upon a well-known civil servant watching the dabchicks in a costume suited for Buckingham Palace rather than bird-watching. I would have taken off my hat to his if I had had one. As usual, I found him more informative about birds than about economics, though he is an expert in both. The baby dabchicks were playing dive-as-dive-can, and I felt happy. My afternoon had not been wasted. I came away past a long line of incredible hats like pancakes balanced on threepenny-bits. They were waiting vainly for the crowd to open and enable their wearers to say that they had seen the Queen. I was struck by the almost universal expression of boredom on the faces beneath. I emerged into the Mall, where the voice of the major-domo was heard through loudspeakers calling to the chauffeurs of Lord This and Lady That. Two negresses were walking up the Mall; both of them, for some unexplained reason, were roaring with laughter and finding life extremely enjoyable.



31 JULY, 1948

I SHALL miss the wide-brimmed hats of the dustmen in Westminster —fine Anzac tiles with one brim rolled up in a graceful sweep. The City councillors have just decided to abolish them "experimentally for two years". What is to indicate whether the experiment has succeeded or failed? Dustmen keener and happier in peaked caps? Or nostalgic complaints from a middle-aged London public who have already lost their muffin-man (with his baize-covered head tray and tinkling handbell), their hansom cabs, their straw hats, and the ladies who offered them sweet, blooming lavender in what would now be called a "vocal refrain"? The abolition of this fine hat seems to symbolize an abolitionist age, a time when to be severely functional is a condition of survival. Why dress a dustman like a stock-rider? I see nothing experimental about this disappearance. These hats will never come back. But there is another London "peculiar", long in abeyance, about which I must ask the Coal Board. Why *did*

coal men put hand to ear when they shouted to us from their carts? Would they shut out their own noise, an indistinguishable howl expected and demanded by us but boring, perhaps, to them? Or was it that the hand-on-ear position flexed the arm so as to make a sounding-board, at once more efficient and more wholesome than a jet-black hand cupped round the mouth? If ever coal becomes so plentiful again as to afford scope for salesmanship, I shall resume my study of this mystery.



4 DECEMBER, 1948

I WAS surprised to see that the dustman was still wearing an Australian "Digger" hat—the change to a new style was announced some time ago. "Hallo," I said to him, "I thought they were going to give you a new sort of hat?" "Yes, they are, at the end of the month." "Will you be sorry?" I asked. "No," he said, "these get dirty too quickly." He pulled off his hat and showed me the grubby inside rim. "This one's only three months old. I've been wearing them twenty years. They make your head go bald down the centre." He ran his hand reflectively over the thin patch on the top of his head. "All the fellows will tell you that. But we'll be all right with the new one. They're going to give us peaked caps. Then you won't be able to tell what any of us are—Postmen, Firemen or Army Officers."



6 NOVEMBER, 1948

STRUTTON GROUND, off Victoria Street, is a normal street market; but it has one peculiarity. Halfway down it on the right is a large blitzed site, and it is here that Black Marketeers display their goods. Some of them lay them out on sacks about twenty feet back from the street, while others hold them enticingly half-concealed in the air. Whenever I go past, I see the sober housewives of Westminster standing on the pavement rather self-consciously, while the hucksters tempt them with their wares. "Come a little nearer, ladies," they simper, and sooner or later a bold adventuress steps off the pavement into the Black Market. It is a delicious sensation to stand there wondering what forbidden fruit can be plucked in this derelict

Garden of Eden. But up till the other day I had never plucked up the courage to take the fatal step off the pavement. That morning I saw someone selling a paper and I felt that at last I could enter the market with a good conscience. I paid my penny and found myself walking up Victoria Street reading a copy of the *Spivs' Gazette.*

25 DECEMBER, 1948

LOOKING at the lovely Norwegian Christmas-tree in Trafalgar Square, with the coloured fountains playing on either side of it and the crowds milling around, I could not help thinking of a remark made to me last Sunday by a clerical friend. For some years he has been studying the decline of church-going. By his calculation, whereas some 25 per cent of adults attend a place of worship at least three times a year, only 1 per cent can be said to have a religion which makes any difference to their lives. "Christmas," he said to me sadly, "has become the pagan saturnalia of a materialist civilization." According to this definition a child ceases to be a Christian when it no longer believes in either Father Christmas or the virgin birth. If belief means acceptance as a scientifically verifiable fact, then many of our leading theologians have long ceased to believe in Christianity. Few of those who attended the Amsterdam Conference, for instance, still hold that there is a valid ontological proof of the existence of God or that the New Testament is "true" in the same sense as the laws of gravity. But if Christian belief means accepting the New Testament story as a revelation of the pattern of life as it should be lived by human beings, then millions of agnostics, including most of the crowd in Trafalgar Square, are still Christians, though as always the vast majority are relatively indifferent and only a tiny number try to live up to the ideal. And of this tiny number I suspect that a majority would be classed as agnostics today. People often write as though the decline in the influence of organized religion—which is a scientifically verifiable fact not only in Christendom but in the Moslem and Buddhist world—is the same thing as a decline in morality. But in reality, while the churches have been emptying, human conduct in this country has in certain ways become more Christian. We are, for instance, an infinitely more humane country today than a century ago. The general standard of

conduct, whether of employers to their work-people or of parents to their children or of everybody to animals, has surely improved immeasurably. As for morality in the narrow sexual sense, there is no evidence that men and women display less Christian love for each other. What has happened is that the moral problems which we face have been so transformed that the orthodox teaching of the churches about married life now seems irrelevant or sometimes sheerly wicked. The strongest case for the pessimist is, of course, in the realm of international politics. But even here is there a decline of morality in the strict sense of the word? Mr. Gladstone would no doubt have found theological reasons, instead of reasons of expediency, for a Christian country to rely on the atom bomb to protect itself against Communism. But would that have made him more Christian?



25 DECEMBER, 1948

I'VE often thought that the men who carry the sandwich-boards in the West-end streets, advertising Turkish baths and cafés and lost-property sales, represent the lowest level of human participation in the hierarchy of commerce and industry. I've found it sad rather than funny that they should turn their boards upside-down during their lunch-hour. The other morning in the Strand I saw six of them standing in a row, each with a much-folded newspaper held up before his eyes in a position that revealed the difficulty of bending the head down while the boards are strapped to the shoulders. Their faces were tense. Sudden bad news, the Tribunal, Uno, Berlin? Walking close enough to see what they read, I found that each was studying a tabulated "grid" of the day's racing prospects; their immobility, expression, and stance were as uniform as any a chorus-master could hope to assemble on the stage. A visitor, seeing such uniformity of mind and body, might need reminding that in this country totalitarianism is quite voluntary.



15 JANUARY, 1949

A MAN who gets so merry that he climbs up Eros, doing £48 worth of damage, and treating a remonstrating policeman with marked

disrespect clearly deserves to cool off for a night or two in a police station. He is also rightly rebuked by the magistrate and made to pay costs and to foot the bill for the repairs to Eros. But really what (as they say) are we coming to when he is sentenced to three months' imprisonment for such an escapade? Surely the question arises whether a man can both be drunk and capable of *malicious* damage. The sentence seems to be so fantastic that I am wondering whether our psychologists can find some special explanation. Has Eros, rightly beloved and admired, become a sacred totemic emblem? Is society unconsciously punishing sacrilege? I would not know. But I do suggest that a three months' sentence—more severe than current sentences for brutality to persons—is out of all real proportion as the penalty for such a commonplace example of drunken foolishness. Its failure as a deterrent has already been demonstrated.



2 APRIL, 1949

THE English passion for impartiality has odd quirks. A friend saw an advertisement in a Hampstead agency the other day which offered a furnished flat to "British-born, non-Jews". He went in and protested against the public display of advertisements with this racial twist. "Why criticize me?" asked the gentleman in the office. "It's my business to take what comes." Then, perhaps feeling this excuse a little inadequate, he added: "Anyway, I'm quite fair. I have just accepted one that says 'Jews only' "!



16 APRIL, 1949

THE first time I saw Mr. Ralph Slater displaying his powers of hypnosis at the Princes he was much troubled with draughts. Everyone on the stage agreed there was a terrible draught. It gave Mr. Slater a cold in the head and a troublesome cough; he was forced continually to reassure his subjects that they were in fact feeling no draught, but were warm and comfortable. Apparently a draught may wake up a hypnotized subject. But none of them did wake up and the show was technically a triumph. All the chosen

victims did exactly what they were told to do to the ecstatic delight of the audience; they even lavished passionate affection on a doll while dreaming that it was a favourite film star. I found myself laughing at intervals for the next twenty-four hours. I went again the next night. Mr. Slater had obviously had a heart-to-heart talk to the manager. There were no draughts. On the contrary. It was, Mr. Slater kept saying, like a Turkish bath on the stage. Draughts it seemed had been too well eliminated. Mr. Slater was like the bow-legged man who practised Coué́ism so hard that he became knock-kneed. Also he was tired having given a matinée performance. Certainly something was wrong with the animal magnetism or whatever it is that they now call hypnotic power. He kept failing. One subject was perfectly in control. The others woke up just when he told them they were most firmly asleep; they tended not to do what they were told and were exchanged for other subjects or sent off to sleep again. This was a bad evening for Mr. Slater, I suppose. A perspiring evening with some loss of face. Actually I found it more instructive than the first slicker performance. The failures made the show completely convincing. They so obviously surprised and dismayed Mr. Slater. They confirmed too the observation that the easy subjects of hypnosis are the young and usually the unsophisticated. Complex and mature minds tend to resist. I should like to hear the testimony of a trained and experienced hypnotist like Mr. Slater about the claims sometimes made that "confessions" in eastern countries (never oddly enough in this country or America where they are also common) are produced by hypnosis. I suggest they would repudiate any power to compel by hypnotic suggestion a tough-minded, middle-aged man to make a public statement, lengthy and complex in content, which contradicted his faith and repudiated his life's loyalties.



23 APRIL, 1949

THEY built a scaffolding round the Red Lion and for several days he stood waiting in his cage. One morning there was a fog; when it lifted, the Red Lion had gone to some safer stabling. He was almost the only object on the South Bank that Hitler left worth moving. The remaining buildings are obviously better demolished. The one exception, of course, is the Shot Tower. The architects declare that

it is a fine decorative job which will fit in nicely with the Exhibition. But for what purpose? I have a friend who says that, provided there were a lift to take him from his dining-room on the ground floor to his bedroom on the top, he would like nothing more than to live in the Shot Tower. But I cannot myself see much use that can be made of its interior. Outside it perhaps provides better opportunities. It would make an excellent parachute tower and, if you arranged a nice spiral slide round it, visitors to the Exhibition could enjoy a perfectly wonderful "helter-skelter". Anyway, Mr. Barry seems to me to have an exciting job. The space is growing in front of his eyes. It is all his to play with. The mud-flats at low tide provide a nice little problem. I doubt if they are suitable for children with buckets and spades. Whether they have a commercial value I don't know. One evening I watched a man solemnly filling buckets with muddy water, pouring it through a sieve and making a pile of the little stones that were left. I have no idea what he was after, and, judging from overheard conversation about bait and treasure, the other numerous watchers on Hungerford Bridge were equally perplexed. But wandering there last night I discovered a real appeal in the mud-flats. A fleet of thirty swans were enjoying the spring evening; some circled elegantly near the water's edge; others were stranded in their search for food and returned to the water, ploughing clumsily up to their breasts in mud, until two of them took a hint from a couple of wild ducks and decided to fly back to the water. They came down with legs stretched out, exactly at the angle of seaplane floats. This may be another hint to the much-advised Mr. Barry. Trips by seaplane from the Exhibition would be no more noisy, and much more amusing to watch, than the trains rumbling and shrieking near by on their approach to Charing Cross!



7 MAY, 1949

"SURELY," I said to myself after listening for a few minutes to the speakers at the Royal Academy banquet, "this is something new in the B.B.C." What was it C. E. Montague said? That most Englishment are "born two whiskies below par"—a remark on which I often ruminate, comparing the relative length of time it takes to unbutton tongues in England, Ireland, Scotland, America, France, Italy and other countries. Two whiskies? Yes; the B.B.C. gets the ration

about right as a rule for people serving on Brains Trusts or in unscripted discussions. But then how restrained, how inhibited these discussions are in comparison with the manly plain-spoken orations at the Royal Academy banquet! How clearly did the doctrine emerge that the highest art is really photography! The decadence of all art that is not representational and popular was never more frankly denounced. In this matter Zdanov, Sir Alfred Munnings, President Truman and Göring are at one. I now await an equally unrestrained reply by one or two modern artists who could explain to the public just what they think of the paintings of the "old gang" and what they themselves are trying to do when they do not make trees look trees or women look womanly. After this, the B.B.C. will never be able to plead fear of what any broadcaster may say if he is turned loose on direct transmission. He could scarcely be more vulgar than the retiring President of the Royal Academy on the subject of "kicking Picasso on the something thingummy", or more tasteless than the Lord Chief Justice with his jovial "hanging" puns. In short, the B.B.C. is immensely to be congratulated on having stumbled, even if accidentally, on a broadcast in which the speakers said exactly what they thought. The Director General of the B.B.C. can scarcely refuse if modern artists now demand a broadcast of their uncensored comments after an equally satisfying and releasing banquet. Sir Alfred Munnings's remarks should serve to bring modern art from the Third to the Light Programme.



10 SEPTEMBER, 1949

THE London bobby, I gather, was himself responsible for going into collar-and-tie order. Given the choice between that and the retention of the close-up uniform neck-band, he voted for collars and ties —by a small majority. Londoners were at first shocked at his appearance: they felt that the custodianship of law and order had been handed over to a *posse* of Mr. Cochran's Young Gentlemen, and they listened uneasily for any indication that the crisp formulae in which the police advise on road traffic matters had been set to music by Mr. Noel Coward. The trouble was the *mésalliance* between the new neckwear and the old familiar helmet; collars and ties would have been all right with a peaked cap. But the amazing truth

is that the bobbies, again by a small majority, decided to keep their helmets. It's possible that most of the men who wanted collars and ties are also those who wanted peaked caps to go with them, but the *vox populi* method has given them the worst of both worlds. Well, I suppose we shall get used to it. The bobbies must make their own peace with their wives, each of whom now has four large shirts and a dozen collars to amalgamate into the laundry parcel. I saw one constable last week, wearing one of the new white overalls for heat-wave duty, who had found his own solution. As he stooped to fasten his bootlace I saw that, beneath his immaculate nightshirt, he was naked to the waist.



8 OCTOBER, 1949

ON Tuesday night I watched the great annual event on the Victoria Embankment. Against a heavy grey sky I noticed, from half a dozen different directions, small darker grey clouds moving towards Charing Cross. They changed shape as they came. When they were near I could see that they were each composed of thousands of starlings. When two clusters approached each other they joined forces, like local processions converging on the Embankment for a May Day Celebration. At last they formed one great cloud over the Gardens. It bellied out into an inflated balloon, then, with surprising speed, narrowed into a long trailing sausage, from which small groups hived off over Trafalgar Square, the Shell building and Waterloo. Soon they were back again, joining up, splitting and wheeling about like a vast army of trained soldiers. It must have been the best part of an hour before they settled down for the night on the buildings of Trafalgar Square. When the trees on the Embankment are bare they will cover them as thickly as leaves do now. I suppose that some ornithologist has written an account of the habits of these birds and their annual gatherings. Are there a given number of centres in England where they always meet each year? From what distances do they come each evening? How many groups combine to make a division and an army? These and a score of other questions seem to me to want answering. But, perhaps, the oddest thing is that the human groups who wander about the Gardens scarcely look up at a spectacle which is at least as exciting as any aircraft display they will pay money to see.

12 NOVEMBER, 1949

IN Sunday's sunshine I walked over Hungerford Bridge to watch the progress of the new concert hall. I fell into conversation with a workman on the bridge. He said he had been six years in the Army and could not get a house. Because he had lived up in the north he was at the end of the queue for somewhere decent in London. He thought it all kinds of sanguinary shames; what did the Government want to go putting up a concert hall for when a worker and ex-soldier couldn't get a house? These Exhibition buildings were using enough material and timber for hundreds of houses, and so on. A little elderly man, also taking a Sunday constitutional, joined in. "What a Government! First thing they did in Parliament was to put up their salaries." Their one idea was to give the worker "easy money"; *he'd* had to work for his living, and now he was seventy-two. The worst thing of all was family allowances. "To pay a woman for having children was to make a prostitute of her."

This was more than I could stomach. I suggested that family allowances, on the contrary, made a mother an independent wage-earner instead of her husband's kept woman. The two conversations drifted apart. The little man, who objected to the social services, was just plain jealous. He had worked very hard for small wages all his life and could not bear to see how much better things now are for the worker. He is a very Tory type; he will vote Conservative and, at a pinch, would probably go Fascist. But the young worker, who started by talking in the same strain, will not vote Conservative and is well aware how much better off he is than he would have been after the First World War. At least he has a job. He agreed that it might be necessary to build some things apart from houses. If the Exhibition brought in dollars, it would be justified. He was just browned off because he was still living in lodgings five years after he came out of the Army. There is more instruction in these two conversations than in many social surveys. Add up all the people who begin by cursing the Government and it doesn't sound as if Labour had a dog's chance in an election. But let the conversation run for half an hour and you discover the difference between the capitalist-minded people and Socialists with a grouse.

26 NOVEMBER, 1949

THANK goodness the moths don't seem to have burrowed far into my tail coat. In a reckless moment I accepted an invitation to the Weizmann-Smuts dinner, where full regalia, which I've not worn for more than ten years, is obligatory. White waistcoat? Yellow, but reasonably clean. It looks distinguished, rather of the Toulouse-Lautrec period. Boiled shirts? Alas! yellow, dusty, impossible. The same goes for white ties, and as for my ancient butterfly collars —impossible. The first shop proudly produces a stiff shirt, costing more than £2 for the tombstone-slab variety which I most dislike. Collar? "Oh, I'm afraid not, sir. We've not seen a stiff collar for nine months." "Then," I said, "perhaps the shirt will not be much use to me. Do you mind holding on to it while I look elsewhere for a collar?" The next shop at once produced one. "Perhaps you have also a stiff shirt?" "*Oh no!* Very difficult to get. We haven't seen any stiff shirts for a very long time." He suggested that I might wear a soft white shirt. I explained that on this one occasion it was impossible; the Weizmann dinner would be a very formal affair. "A wonderful man, Weizmann," I said. "Yes," he said dubiously, and then brightening up, "he certainly seems to have kept the Jews quiet lately." This surely is a remark of a classical perfection, destined, I feel sure, as a political commentary to outlast "niggers begin at Calais". In the end I decided to go to Moss Bros.

17 DECEMBER, 1949

OUTSIDE my office window stand the fine trees of Lincoln's Inn. Today, in one of them, three men, arranged in a pattern like stage acrobats, are lopping off boughs. They wear no safety belts and they carry saws tied by cords to their sides. Sometimes one of them will crawl out along a bough that looks too flimsy to bear his weight. He does not straddle the bough or cling to it with his legs, but lies along it with his toes resting on the top of it. A cat couldn't do a neater job. Steeplejacking is easy and safe in comparison, and as for window-cleaning, it does not begin to compete. I asked the oldest

of these men, while we watched one of the others far out on a limb, eighty feet up, with nothing beneath him, whether there were other firms that did a similar job. He said there was one other in this country. His firm is "The Chiltern Tree Surgery". There were three of them and they worked in a team. He got about £12 a week minus income tax and his younger colleagues rather less. Yes, they were insured by Lloyd's. It was true that climbing irons would make the job safer but they would damage the trees. Did they have any special training or begin very young? He said: "I did not begin this job until I was thirty-five, but I've been a devil for climbing ever since I was a child—that I must admit. There are a lot that try the work and can get up the tree all right, but give up when it comes to climbing out on the limbs." At this point a large bough crashed to the ground, leaving the man with a long stretch to crawl backwards to the trunk. One of the watchers below said: "I'd rather him than me." I disagreed. I was just green with envy.



24 DECEMBER, 1949

LONDON looks pre-war. To come down Regent Street, positively riotous in colour, into Trafalgar Square, with the Christmas-tree and the silver fountains and the streamers and bunting—why, if the Tory press didn't remind you that we are a miserable, enslaved and starving people, you might even kid yourself that England was capable this year of having a merry Christmas. The shops perpetrate the illusion of jollity. Certainly it's eleven years since they looked like this. There are far more imported goods, and also more home-made goods kept at home for the British housewife. It's not only that you can get all the fruit, including pineapples and such-like, that you want, but that you have only to dip, somewhat deeply, into your pocket to buy gorgeous luxuries like *marrons glacés* and even chow-chow, lichees, and cumquats—all of which were displayed by one grocer of my acquaintance who had no notion of what they were. I've not yet heard a Hungarian band or seen a man playing a harp in the street, but I have seen a barrow of coconuts. As for poultry, you can only get into the butchers' shops by clambering over mountains of it. (One London paper was so ignorant of the first principles of propaganda that it printed this week a caricature

of a queue lining up for one turkey, though every reader would know that if he didn't buy a twelve-pound bird for sixty shillings it would not be because it wasn't there to buy!) Sugar is still short, but that complaint is lessened by the fact that you can buy all the plum puddings and sweet cakes you want. You can get drunk on anything but whisky. Those who still want to grumble complain that there are no dried eggs or only one egg on this week's ration book. On the whole food front one may say that we can enjoy Christmas cheer in the consciousness that though some things are dear, the basic foods are better in quality and still blessedly low in price. When you come to clothes and toys the situation is very much the same. Small toys have multiplied out of all memory and some are not dear. Big toys are expensive; imported French dolls may be three pounds each and an unfurnished doll's house may cost five pounds. The good mechanical toys, the trains and boats, not to speak of the children's tricycles, are all available again; but their price, I'm told, is double or sometimes treble what it was in pre-war days. For the first time I hear of well-to-do parents buying refurbished, second-hand toys. On the other hand, if you want to give your girl or your wife gloves or a scarf or a pair of bedroom slippers you'll pay less than last year. Add all this up and it's a pretty good and jolly picture. Personally, I shall enjoy Christmas more because under this awful Labour Government we no longer need to subscribe to charity coal—the coldest kind of heating I know of—and, as we shop, we no longer have to look the other way for fear of seeing the pinched and wistful faces of children pressed against the lighted windows.



31 DECEMBER, 1949

THE shop window displayed a familiar scene of a manger, plastic oxen, a mother and child with a fine entourage of angels. The small girl said indignantly to her mother: "Mummy, don't tell me they are bringing religion into Christmas now!"



24 JUNE, 1950

ON the night of the first day of Ascot, the Junior Carlton did its not inconsiderable best to demonstrate how wrong its members are

when they complain that the rich are all impoverished and that Englishmen are now all reduced to a dead level of dullness by a Socialist Government. The gas torches were flaring away as if to proclaim a famous victory. The gilded youth of England, in full regalia and the loveliest ball dresses, trod up the red carpet, into an entrancing world of pre-war gaiety and splendour. If all are equal, as George Orwell put it, some are certainly more equal than others. I did not at first see all this. My view was blocked by a crowd, gathered on each side of the entrance, waiting for Winston Churchill, that day happily unhurt after an accident in which his car had apparently run into his attendant police car. I said to a bystander: "What's on here tonight?" "You can search me," he replied, "a dart match, I expect."



23 SEPTEMBER, 1950

LAST Sunday afternoon two small seven-year-olds, a boy and a girl, decided, very sensibly, to bathe in the fountains of Trafalgar Square. Happily and uninhibited, they undressed near a bench occupied by three grown-ups, whose faces expressed: "This has nothing to do with us." Once undressed, the children dashed joyously to the fountains, bathed in the spray with shrieks of delight, jumped on to the side of the basin and dangled their toes in the blue water; then, still laughing, they rushed back to the bench, dried themselves with their underclothes, and then dashed back again to the water.

They were still having a wonderful time—and so were the passers-by—when the Law descended. It was a smiling young policeman who came ambling round the Square and walked across to the children. A friend who was near by did not hear what the policeman said, but he helped the boy to adjust his braces, and then fastened the buttons of the girl's dress. "Got children of his own, I daresay," said a bystander. The children walked away, rather crestfallen, towards the main road. Turning suddenly, they saw the policeman following them. Instead of running away, they came back towards him, and he, taking a hand in each of his, guided them safely across the traffic. A more eloquent plea for a children's Lido could hardly be made; nor will anyone ever frighten those two little ones with the nursery warning: "I'll tell a policeman."



20 JANUARY, 1951

I AM glad that it is not only Americans who can buy up the historic dwellings of London. India is now a competitor. I discovered this last week when I admired the Queen Anne panelling (which has been exposed, after the removal of twenty or thirty layers of paint) on the walls of No. 41 Craven Street, opened on Monday by Pandit Nehru as an Indo-British club. Lady Mountbatten, who introduced the Prime Minister, surprised her audience by revealing that even the details of interior decoration were the personal choice of the High Commissioner, Krishna Menon, whom many of us have long known less as artist than as eloquent opponent of imperialism. He had more than usual reason to chuckle. Trafalgar Square, the heart of the British Empire, is at the top of the street. The statue of Lord Outram, who suppressed the Indian Mutiny, confronts you as you turn on to the Embankment. But, as a lady from Edinburgh, with whom I fell into conversation on the Embankment under the catalpa tree on Sunday morning, remarked: "I've just passed the statues of Clive and Outram and Sir Bartle Frere as I came along. It seems funny now, doesn't it? All that kind of nationalism is quite washed away, isn't it?" I agreed; but when I asked after the whereabouts of the Stone, she explained that, after all, that was just Scottish patriotism.



17 MARCH, 1951

A VISITING French rugger team, getting out of a motor-coach at Buckingham Palace the other day, was visibly amused at the clockwork stamping and kicking of the two Guardsmen on sentry-go; and I realized that it is probably the habit of most British citizens over about four years of age to hurry past these jerking automata with averted eyes, rather as one pretends not to see a person of the opposite sex coming out of the bathroom. We know what our Guardsmen are doing, the noise of their boots leaves us in no doubt, and even if we happen to watch them walking along, we look away quickly when they are about to turn. It is all part of an imperishable British something-or-other, and their Majesties seem safer inside

the Palace than they would if the sentries merely walked up and down doing the ordinary right-about-turn of some slovenly line regiment. But you can't explain this to a foreigner. On the rare occasions when I have defied convention so far as to peep at the face of a stamping Guardsman, I have felt relieved that the combination of bearskin and chinstrap leaves only the tip of the nose with which to display emotion.



28 APRIL, 1951

ONE of the most revealing stories of the week was of a British correspondent who tried to explain to a German the austerity of British economy. The German (who has plenty of meat if he can pay for it) said, "Well, you won the war, didn't you? You can't expect to have everything!"



17 NOVEMBER, 1951

ORATORY in Hyde Park last Sunday afternoon had changed very little since the last time I was there immediately before the Election. There was a crowd round the Catholic Evidence and another round the thoughtful pacifists from Kingsway Hall. There was the gentleman with the long black beard explaining to no one at all the prophecies of Isaiah and other Biblical scholars concentrating on Daniel or Ezekiel. It was clear that we had to hurry up and be saved because the world was just coming to an end. An uproarious mob was heckling the gentlemen who looked for guidance to the Pyramids. There was a crowd singing hymns, reading words from posters, and a smaller crowd under Salvation Army leadership lustily rejoicing in the Blood of the Lamb. The spokesmen of the Coloured Workers, the Conservatives, the Communists and the Socialist Party of Great Britain all addressed capacity crowds (not the capacity of Hyde Park but of their lungs), Two speakers were new to me. The first had no platform; he was explaining that Conservatives promised to abolish all bulk-purchase schemes except those with the Commonwealth, but that he had found on inquiry that only six out of 158 schemes were in force outside the Commonwealth; that, of these,

three were with Iron Curtain countries which in any case did not trade with private concerns, and that the others were with Peron, who would have preferred, the speaker reported, to deal with private business because he could get a better bargain at the expense of Britain. The other newcomer (or new at least to me) was explaining very earnestly just why the Pope was wrong in his remarks about mothers and babies. The mother, he said, should always be preferred because it did the baby no harm not to be born: it existed before it was born (how do these fellows get to know these things?). Men and women have the illusion that they "make" babies, whereas actually they only offer the baby houseroom, as it were. "Caretakers", I think, was his word. So if the baby's birth is postponed, it can always wait for another opportunity.



1 DECEMBER, 1951

THEY say that when police were put on to the exits of the South Bank site to prevent thieving during the building of the Festival, one labourer was often stopped as he wheeled out a barrow of straw. Determined to run no risks, the police always thoroughly searched under the straw and found nothing. The other day one of the policemen saw this labourer in a pub and said: "Well, the Festival is over now and whatever you got away with, you might as well come clean. What were you taking away with you when we searched your barrow?" Said the labourer: "Barrows, of course."



6 SEPTEMBER, 1952

MARX and Spencer are buried next to each other in Highgate Cemetery. I wonder how many people have made a joint pilgrimage? Herbert Spencer is a little to the left of Marx as you come in at the lower gate. To track down Marx you first have to find the Scrymgeour grave, a large spreading affair which was obviously paid for by a man who was a real success in the world. There you branch off to the right for the cheap stone that covers Karl. The gravedigger cannot understand why so many people come every year to this

particular one of his charges. "That man Marx didn't do any good, did he? Haven't heard that he made anything but trouble for the world." He made the cemetery a one-man show, and visitors did not pay nearly enough attention to all the lovely monuments and vaults and all the other famous people. Herbert Spencer, for instance. There was a good man. The old gravedigger can remember him coming up to erect his tombstone on the site he had bought, to make sure that it would look well when he was underneath it; after it had passed all tests, it was stored for several years until his death. As a boy the old man had to do a lot of sandpapering on the stone before Herbert was quite satisfied. Many years ago parties of Americans used to come to admire the monument which Spencer took so much trouble over, but they do not come any more. They seldom ask for George Eliot or Holyoake, who are a few yards away from Spencer, nor for Michael Faraday, nor for any of a long list of "famous" Victorian lady novelists that the gravedigger can rattle off with ease. Why, oh why, do they keep treading down the grass behind old Mr. Scrymgeour?



25 OCTOBER, 1952

THE young man was sitting on a bus in which there were four empty seats. Three forlorn would-be passengers were left standing in the rain. "Full up," shouted the clippie, grandly waving her ticket rack. When she came for the young man's ticket, he looked steadily at her and noted down her number. Angrily she asked what he was doing. "You refused to take those people when you had seats," he said. "What's that got to do with you? Who are you?" The young man said calmly: "Secret Police." There was a dead silence on the bus. The clippie went white. I'm sure she soon saw the joke, but perhaps she'll think twice on the next wet afternoon. But the young man had better not try saying "Deuxième Bureau" on a French bus.



1 NOVEMBER, 1952

IN the amiable *Times* correspondence about the necessity for toastmasters, Sir Carleton Allen, Q.C., has ranked them with the duck-billed platypus as a unique but moribund species deserving of

protection. Professor Allen has never used this image in defending some of the hoarier rules of Common Law procedure, but on the whole I think he is right about the toastmaster, and the duck-bill (when you come to think of it) is not inapt. Even those who dislike public dinners should permit them their traditional proprieties, and if the toastmaster goes he will leave only the drill-sergeant to fight the encroaching microphone. Toastmasters, after all, are probably as old as toast—or at any rate as old as the practice of putting pieces of toast in loving-cups. But I confess to liking them (without being fond of public dinners) because of the constantly frustrated hope that, like lesser men, they will break down or make some monstrous mistake.

I shall always regret that I was not at the City dinner where a famous toastmaster heralded what turned out to be an inordinately long speech by Ramsay MacDonald. Having descended as usual from the intimidating, high monotone reserved for "My Lord Mayor, My late Lord Mayor, Your Grace, Your Excellencies, My Lords" to the little tonal twist of the "Ladies and Gentlemen", he roared in conclusion: "Pray for the silence of the Right Honourable J. Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of Great Britain."



29 NOVEMBER, 1952

SOMEONE could compile an amusing collection of the rather acid notes that have passed between the War Office and the City fathers on the subject of marching troops. There are also many gracious little letters, like the one in which the Lord Mayor in March this year told the Second Battalion, Coldstream Guards, that they had been added to the select list of regiments allowed to march through the City of London with bayonets fixed and drums beating. (They did this for the first time, with due ceremony, on Monday evening.) But since the so-called privilege was first granted (by warrant from Charles II to the "Foot Guards" for a recruiting march in 1662) the list has taken in six other regiments and cold-shouldered many more. Time after time "the Lord Mayor assumes that it was by inadvertence" that certain troops, without seeking his permission, thundered through the City of London with colours unfurled. His Lordship can do no more. Troops with an official "route" in this country

can march where they will; and whoever may say them nay, no one can stop them—unless they are willing to take part in a little local pageant. The exclusion of the non-favoured regiments seems exactly comparable with the ancient bluff: "Trespassers will be prosecuted." In one letter, full of epithets, the Lord Mayor of 1790 tried to stop the Bank of England picket marching to the Bank in the evenings. The War Office sent him a formal acknowledgment, but the picket still marches nightly.



31 JANUARY, 1953

HUNDREDS of people who arrive at Charing Cross underground between 7.30 and 9.30 in the morning are familiar with "Dirty Dick". He is an extremely dirty white-spotted cat. He is also very fat and more ugly than any cat with whom I have ever been on stroking terms. He usually sits on a small wall edging the Villiers Street side of the Embankment Gardens, and receives parcels of food and kindly words from sentimental Londoners. First he is fed by the coffee stall where night revellers eat their final snacks; then he is presented with bits of food by early morning workers who put their offerings a little higher up the street; finally, when the clerical and typist army arrives, admirers add more bits of breakfast in paper bags. Wandering out for a morning newspaper, I have often watched this process, but it was not until last week that it occurred to me to ask how Dirty Dick managed at the week-ends. I learned it from a stout and friendly old dame who sells flowers across the road. She had a neat little parcel with a Lyons label when we called on her on Saturday evening. No, she said, that wasn't her bit of supper, but eleven-pennyworth of fish which a lady, who fed Dirty Dick every morning during the week, bought and left with her to give him before she went home on Saturday nights. Much interest, she said, centred round Dirty Dick. She watched a man who left food every morning, and there was a girl, too. She thought they had become acquainted as a result of their joint interest in Dirty Dick. The man was apt to loiter a little before putting down his bag, and the girl was also careful to time her arrival. The flower-lady scented romance. She herself had grown fond of Dirty Dick, and then she added: "Do you hear that blackbird? I have been listening to him for the past three years. He sings louder than the traffic, louder than the trains

at Charing Cross, even louder than the band on a summer evening; the only thing I'd never forgive Dirty Dick would be if he hurt that blackbird." And there are people who walk through Charing Cross as if it were no more than a collection of houses and streets!

21 NOVEMBER, 1953

I REMEMBER walking in the City one day soon after the Great Fire of London. (I refer not to the fire which destroyed the old St. Paul's but to the one which, nearly three centuries later, has revealed to us the full beauty of Wren's building.) In a tobacconist's shop, still miraculously intact, I fell into conversation with a City gentleman. He said: "At last we can see St. Paul's, can't we? And it's good to have some space and light let into the place." I said: "I agree with you. But how long after the war will it be before all the property-owners have asserted their right to rebuild on the same sites?" He looked at me with surprise. "We can't really be as mad as that," he said. Today, I am sorry to say, my prophecy, mad though it seemed in 1940, seems to be proving correct. Winston Churchill, who gave the orders that saved St. Paul's thirteen years ago, is now, it seems, ready to see it dwarfed by vast new banking and insurance buildings.

21 NOVEMBER, 1953

A MOUNTED policeman planted himself at a big traffic corner the other day. I noticed that people frequently crossed the dangerous street to ask him questions. He told me that on horseback he had to tell the way to twice as many people as he had done when on foot. He laughed and agreed when I suggested that the reason was that people wanted a "respectable" excuse for patting the horse.

24 APRIL, 1954

I AM usually in Covent Garden in the morning. Not, as the song suggests, before going to bed, but merely on my way to the office. The walk takes a little longer by way of Long Acre than by the Strand, because one has to look slippy to avoid knocking into men

with baskets on their heads, or being run into by lorries backing on to the pavement. But the crowd is always fun and full of argument; here are the first batches of each new fruit, and I try to name the varieties of apple as they roll unheeded into the gutter. The traffic block on one recent morning was the most fantastic I'd ever seen. The barrows as well as the lorries were stuck and had already been stationary, the drivers told me, for twenty minutes. All work seemed at a full stop. The cause was a still figure lying in the middle of the road, badly injured, I deduced from the fact that the police were making sure no one moved him. How an ambulance ever got there through the solid traffic I don't know. Once more I asked myself how a great city can go on accepting so ludicrous a situation. Every day hundreds, indeed thousands, of men and motor and horse hours are wasted by the extraordinary system which plants a market of perishable goods, which must all be got away as quickly as possible, in narrow streets, in the very middle of this vast city. This is one of those symbolic problems. Everybody has agreed for a generation that something must be done; Commissions and Committees have sat and reported; technical difficulties and vested interests have always proved too strong. The House of Commons could pass a Bill to pull down the Adelphi Terrace—one of the glories of British architecture—so that someone could make money building one of the most hideous structures in London, but no one can act about Covent Garden. We waited for the bombs; Hitler let us down by not doing the job thoroughly. So Covent Garden was rehabilitated, in the hope, presumably, that the hydrogen bomb would be more effective.



15 MAY, 1954

I WALKED out of the Piccadilly sunshine, parked my brief-case in the cloakroom of Burlington House, and joined the crowd in the Academy Exhibition. Half an hour later, I came out limp, convinced that with ten years of hard work I could learn the craft as well as many of the exhibitors, but very uncertain whether it was worth the effort. I paid another two shillings to see the paintings of Augustus John; an hour later I came out exhilarated, knowing that I could never be an artist, if it meant painting like Augustus John, but that it was worth a lifetime (or what remained of it) to try and fail. At the

cloakroom, a melancholy attendant with a knobbly face, which I knew I could never paint, surprised me by bringing someone's hat, coat and umbrella. "Those aren't mine," I said. "What would have happened if I had taken them?" "You'd have never got away with it," he said. "Why not?" I asked. "You'd be too honest," he said, fetching me the brief-case. To this inconsequent reply I gave no answer, being absorbed in the question just how Augustus John would have got the right effect of bumps and creases.



19 JUNE, 1954

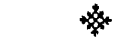
WHILE I was away a colleague of mine had an odd day. If he were not a truthful man I would scarcely believe him. His story reads like the opening of a novel called *The Case of the Three Curious Questions*. Leaving this office, he was stopped by a woman who, presumably, was taking an opinion poll. She pointed to a large hoarding and asked him to estimate its size. "Do you want me to guess or to work it out?" he asked. She said she didn't mind. But, as she disapproved of every statement he made, he left her to her dissatisfaction, and fled into Holborn. There he was immediately accosted by a tall American, gaberdine-suited, dacron-shirted, rimless glasses, Stetson hat. "Pardon me," he said, "but which way is doo west?" After a little discussion, they settled this point. "Then that's west-south-west," the American said, pointing over the roof of the Pearl offices. "You may think I'm crazy," he added by way of explanation, "but I promised my little girl that, while I was away, I'd face towards Dallas just as she was starting for school and think about her." My friend turned into Kingsway, meditating about Mecca and the correct orientation of prayer-mats. His reverie was interrupted outside the Holborn Empire by a man in shirtsleeves, who dashed up to him from a side alley. Seizing my friend's lapel, the man gasped: "Have you seen my monkey?"



26 JUNE, 1954

AT ten o'clock each morning the milk cart arrives in our street. The village of Charing Cross knows no more popular moment. We pour out from our offices with pint and half-pint bottles for that cup of

tea at 11 o'clock which all the world knows is required by the British constitution. Until the other day we also enjoyed the chance to pat the pony which pulled the Express Dairy van. For half an hour you could hear from our windows the pleasant chink of milk bottles and the Edwardian cloppety-clop of the pony as he went from street to street. The milkman's pride in his sleek pony was a fine thing to see; it stopped at all the right spots and came quietly along to the next one when he called from the end of the street that it was time to move on. Some six weeks ago the company decided that the pony should work a less exacting round on the edge of South London. The milkman is broken-hearted; he pays the pony occasional visits, but in Charing Cross he has to put up with an electric van which, in unhappy contrast to his pony, is apt to break down. Now that there is no pony to munch a lump of sugar, most of the charm of fetching our morning milk has gone. But the girls still run out of the offices carrying their empty milk bottles in front of them as gallantly as if they were babies. The men are for some reason shy about it. They bring brown paper or even newspapers to wrap the bottles in, for all the world as if they were purchasing ladies' underclothing or bottles of whisky.



26 JUNE, 1954

"JET engines in the country and now these infernal helicopters! Soon there will be no peace even in Charing Cross!" I said, shutting the window angrily. The window-cleaner, who had opened it, said: "There doesn't seem much sense in it, does there? They say six people can save forty minutes getting to the airport in each helicopter. I don't see how that helps the people in hospital who can't get any sleep. After all most people can't afford to go by helicopter and those people who can afford the cost are just those who can afford the time to go by bus!" Following this train of thought I wondered first why the Air Authorities don't use underground stations or even arrange a special branch line at the airport. And then I remembered that somebody told me that the new post-war generation doesn't mind noise in the way we did. They leave the wireless on all day; they don't want to think and so don't find a row disturbing.... I don't believe this. If the younger generation doesn't mind about noise that is only because it is younger. I don't

believe any younger generation has ever minded noise. This is only one of the technocrats' excuses. I wish they would apply their ingenuity to "silencing" aircraft as, in the course of years, they have silenced motor-cars. In that case no one would object to enabling a handful of people to have another drink before their plane leaves Heathrow.

11 DECEMBER, 1954

THE notion that there is a common law right to stand up and make a speech anywhere in public, and especially in certain places like Trafalgar Square and Lincoln's Inn Fields, is commonly held by British citizens, especially, perhaps, by those who want to exercise it. In point of fact, such a meeting can at any time be held to be technically an obstruction of the highway and can be prevented by the police. This is what happened in the East End when the Socialist movement was in its infancy. Using the technique that the I.W.W. developed to such effect in America, one speaker after another would mount a rostrum, make his opening remarks and then quietly surrender to the waiting police. The authorities soon became embarrassed and the public began to laugh at and resent such absurd persecution. Now, certain places, like Trafalgar Square and Tower Hill, have been so long and so habitually used that no Home Secretary would interfere with meetings there except in an emergency. In the days of John Burns, Cunningham Graham and Bernard Shaw (who declared he himself ran away when the police began to look ugly), the crowds were so great in Trafalgar Square that the police did decide to interfere. Afterwards it was agreed—and the agreement is enshrined in Regulations made by the Ministry of Works—that at certain times Nelson would look down with a blind eye on mortals arguing and haranguing. Clearly, free speech as thus defined is a precarious liberty which, like others, can only be maintained at the cost of eternal vigilance.

These thoughts are put into my mind by complaints that speakers in Lincoln's Inn Fields are being obstructed. We know them well, at least by sight. There is the tall, handsome man with the well-combed flowing locks, who is often taken for an Indian, but known to his fans as the Cockney Jesus. The title sprang from a remark he addressed to a lady in his audience. "Madam," he was heard to

declare, "I am not saying that I *am* Jesus Christ." Pacifists of rather different types may be heard from two corners of the Fields. There is also the entertaining Mr. Bonar Thompson, who still seems to talk about anything with equal facility and success. There are a variety of Socialist speakers, including the undaunted fellow from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, several Communists, and a large red-faced official speaker for the Tories. One or two of these collect considerable crowds almost every day. The technique of acquiring the site for oneself is to go early in the morning with some sort of stand, set it up, and maintain it with the goodwill of the police against all rivals. The complaint now made is that motorists, preferring parking space to oratory, have recently been allowed by the police to obstruct the site in the lunch hour. I hope that the obstruction has been, from a police point of view, purely accidental. As one who suffers a good deal in this office from being unable not to hear the cloud of oratory which comes through his windows, I should be personally quite glad if meetings occurred less often. But as a citizen with a love of the British tradition in my heart I should certainly sign and support any petition against such abuse of traditional usage if I were persuaded, as in fact I am not, that the police were parties to it. Indeed, I rely on the police to tell the obstructors where to get off.



25 DECEMBER, 1954

"I NOTICED", wrote Carlyle in his diary (I have not checked his exact words), "that the men on the street corner were unusually drunk tonight; then I remembered it was the birthday of our Redeemer." Drunkenness is less apparent in our day, but Christmas, for pagan and Christian alike, maintains its orgiastic character. Go from Bond Street to Bow—if you can get through the continuous traffic jam—and you will find the same vast queues and crowds buying, buying, buying. And don't believe that this flood of generosity is the only sign of that Christmas spirit which in recent wars grounded the bombers and silenced the guns for just one day in the year. It even has its effect on official standards about law and order in the streets. Why is it that you have to fight your way past the big shop-window displays, the Uncle Hollies and the Mad Hatters' Tea Parties, while the police do nothing to prevent obstruc-

tion? Here at least the law is softened for rich and poor alike. "This day shall change all griefs and quarrels into love." One thing changed to love is the ancient grief, or quarrel, of the street trader with his Christmas trayful of toys, puzzles, "jokes" and puppets. At this time he takes up his stand, with the nonchalance of a man leaning over his own front gate, in thoroughfares as sacrosanct as High Holborn—where he has been doing it now for long enough to give him something like a Common Law right. The police look on with the wary and rather self-conscious tolerance associated with Boat Race Night. They might, indeed, find it hard to prove that any of these hard-working salesmen were obstructing the pavement—the only bits not covered with struggling shoppers are, in fact, the little pools of space where the toy Charlie Chaplins rush round on one foot and a walking-cane. Surely Christmas has become one of the oddest religious festivals in the world.



15 OCTOBER, 1955

A VERY old man got into the carriage. He was carrying a curiously carved stick which was made out of the timber, he said, of one of the many Thames tugs of which he had been master. He showed me a list of them. He had been afloat, he said, for sixty-four years, and he told me about narrow escapes in the blackout. I said I hoped he had a good pension. No, he had no pension; he'd worked for three companies, and that, it seemed, he regarded as adequate justification. But he took out a wallet and showed me a piece of parchment certifying that he had been many years ago made a freeman of the City of London. And another one for which he'd paid a lot of money, which made him a life Governor of the Guild of Freemen and enabled him to go to various functions without paying an entrance fee. He belonged to an older generation; it never occurred to him that he had been inadequately rewarded for a lifetime's service. When we got to Battersea Bridge, he jumped up, forgetting for the moment the rheumatism that bent his back. "There she is," he said, with a kind of reverent excitement, and he stood up gazing at the river until she was out of sight.



5 NOVEMBER, 1955

THE bother about the words "overheard on a bus" is that they are so easily made up. But a friend of undoubted integrity swears that he overheard this last week: "Since she made the decision for Christ, the point is that what with that and the pools, her time is now completely occupied."

Part Five

THE PEOPLE AND THE LAW



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

6 FEBRUARY, 1954

LESS than six months after the Gowers Commission on capital punishment launched its admirable report, the waters seem to have closed over it; and the restored surface of official equanimity shows not the smallest ripple of coming action. I have been reading, in the current *British Journal of Delinquency* (which, in four years, has become one of the best criminological reviews in the world) a symposium of views on the Gowers Report by Mr. Gerald Gardiner, Q.C., Dr. Edward Glover, and Dr. Hermann Mannheim. Their expert analysis should convince anyone that the only new thing that can be done about the death penalty is to abandon it. Even the Gowers Report, as Dr. Glover says, "blew its terms of reference sky-high" when it recorded its agreement with Professor Thorsten Sellin that "whether the death penalty is used or not, or whether executions are frequent or not, both death penalty States and abolition States show rates which suggest that these rates are conditioned by other factors than the death penalty". But why on earth did the Commission, when it came to consider deterrence, feel such respect for the "considered and unanimous views" of police and prison service representatives and judges? It wasn't considering the treatment of pickpockets or prostitutes, or any other regular customers in the courts. But although, as Dr. Mannheim suggests, credulity and the appetite for ready-made conclusions still play too large a part in the work of our Royal Commissions, this one relied less on hearsay evidence than any of its predecessors had done. Are we to have ten more years of executions, I wonder, and then yet another Royal Commission?



1 MAY, 1954

PEOPLE are apt to laugh at the suggestion that judicial hanging, so far from acting as a universal deterrent, holds such a loathsome fascination for many unbalanced people as to constitute in extreme cases an actual incentive to killing. Far too many decent men and women,

never having bothered to inquire into the relation between sex and pain, have accepted, often reluctantly, the conventional view that society dare not abolish the hangman. I hope all these innocently misguided folk will read and note the unpleasant story, reported in *The Times* last Wednesday, of the conviction at Nottingham of an assistant public hangman for "publishing obscene books and photographs"—apparently of a sadistic nature. The police were first led to investigate the man's activities by an advertisement offering "an old-type hangman's rope in exchange for an antique whip". The clients in this case were stated to be "company directors, a schoolmaster, an incorporated accountant and others who would be ashamed for their identity to be disclosed". Just so. No doubt also they all swell the volume of support for capital punishment—and, being educated people, help to rationalize their own perversions into convincing arguments. This story, incidentally, does much to discredit that other hoary old chestnut of hanging propaganda—the devoted public spirit of those men who can bring themselves, for the sake of a social duty, to accept the office of public hangman.



30 JULY, 1955

I SUPPOSE one should welcome the Home Secretary's promise that the posting of execution notices on prison gates shall be discontinued, but I can't help thinking that these terse announcements did something to keep before the public mind the grisly mechanics of the death penalty. The crowd that lined up to read them was never noticeably peculiar; it was a kind of delegation from us all—a random specimen of the honest public in whose name someone had just been carefully and methodically strangled. The printed notice was also one of the final vestiges of public execution; are we to regard its disappearance as one more step towards a guilty secrecy that might enable many people to forget the whole problem? With or without the notice, of course, there will always be a few people to stand and wait, even if they are merely passers-by who notice a small knot of relatives and are reminded by it that an execution is due. (I wonder what proportion of a normal passing crowd, realizing what was "on", would actually hurry past?) On the other hand, the Gowers

Report in 1953 recommended that these notices should be discontinued simply on the ground that they were no longer necessary in days when the job of deterrent publicity was so efficiently done by the press. So one minute recommendation of the Gowers Committee is actually carried out! Hanging, however, continues, and instead of reprieve being almost automatic, as we expected it would be for all but particularly cold-blooded and calculated murderers, the fanatics for capital punishment continue to get their own way, even in cases where the public would certainly desire a reprieve.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

25 MARCH, 1933

I WAS present not long ago at a lecture on the subject of crime and punishment. A member of the audience, evidently sure that he had found a corker, asked whether the lecturer had ever known of a case of a man who had been flogged going back to prison. The delusion that the "cat" is an effective deterrent is not confined to the lecture-going public. It affects the Bench, and experts of one sort or another still go on repeating the frequently exploded statement that garrotting was put down by the lash. (Mr. Asquith as early as 1900 stated in the House of Commons that "garrotting was put down without resort to the lash".) In Mr. and Mrs. Calvert's admirable book *The Law-Breaker* (Routledge, 7s. 6d.) a number of recent examples are cited. One man, sentenced to seven years' penal servitude in 1930, had been given twenty strokes of the "cat" in 1926; another, sentenced to three years and the "cat" in 1932, had been given the "cat" in 1929, and so on, and so on. Another delusion is that "crimes of violence" in the sense of crimes against the person were on the increase. On the contrary they are less than they were before the war. You will find the full figures in this book. The mistake—which is used to justify savage sentences—arises from the fact that technically "crimes of violence" include "house-breaking", a crime which, in common with all forms of theft, naturally increases with poverty and unemployment. Ninety-five per cent of indictable crime in this country is against property. But for the grace of Mammon . . .

8 DECEMBER, 1934

My head goes just like a clock before it strikes, and I shake awful then. . . . The policeman in my head keeps lashing me every night. . . . I cannot rest or sleep. Keep starting up feeling the lash across my body. My mind is in agony.

THESE are extracts from letters left by the Dartmoor convict who hanged himself last week after being sentenced to twelve strokes with the "cat". They provide magnificent evidence for the effectiveness of flogging as a punishment, and should, if we were logical, increase the demand for the extension of this penalty for further offences. Not being logical, the case shocked all of us, including the coroner. It is true that there are other forms of torture which are said to be equally effective, but I doubt whether the rack and thumbscrew have any such real advantage over the "cat" as would justify the expense of their manufacture. It is, of course, unlucky that the ferocity of a punishment should have so little effect as a deterrent, but no doubt it comforts Authority to feel that if it cannot prevent crime, it is expert at least in avenging it. But it would be more gratifying to the public taste for whippings if these were performed in public. I am reminded of these lines by George Colman:

Time was—before the philanthropic trash—
When jails resounded with the hearty lash;
When any morning some known rogue you'd meet,
At the cart's tail sent yelling through the street;
While the delighted crowd with jovial cries,
Urged on the hangman's boisterous exercise.
The West-End dainties paid a visit daily,
To see the strumpets whipped at the Old Bailey,
And made high bets which blubbering lass would bare . . .

But I must cut my quotation short, for Colman is explicit about the connection between flagellation and lust—a connection which every educated person realizes but which neither judges nor the public as a whole care openly to admit.

6 JULY, 1935

FROM my own experience at two public schools I should say that corporal punishment has usually ceased to be savage and has become merely an extremely absurd and psychologically damaging ritual. I do not remember that boys were frightened of being caned, but it is not too much to say that for many of them the whole business of beating was the central interest of life. A correspondent in this journal last week said that boys did not remember being beaten five minutes afterwards—which incidentally makes the case for beating as a deterrent rather ridiculous. But he is wrong. Another correspondent (whose letter with many others cannot be printed for lack of space) writes this week to say that he happened to sit behind two small boys on a bus the other day, and that they talked of nothing else for half an hour. That fits my experience. The prowess with the cane of a particular master or a prefect was a constant subject of conversation. The problems of technique—the kind of stroke that hurt, the most efficient type of weapon—and there is almost no article from the walking-stick to the slipper and the lavatory brush which is not used for beating at a public school—the number of strokes that might be fairly inflicted for a particular offence, the dangers or advantages of padding, the types of clothes that provided most protection, together with endless bawdy jokes all centring on the primary fact of violent stimulation of the buttocks—these were the most common topics of conversation whenever small boys were alone. And just as these smaller boys were quite ignorant that their conversation was sexual, so the prefects, many of whom took their duties extremely seriously, had no idea that their enjoyment in beating was a substitute for the natural development of sexual life in adolescence. In conversation they made no pretence that beating was not a pleasure. I have seen prefects toss a coin for the privilege of beating a particular boy, and I can remember what a roaring joke we thought it in a prefects' study when we found an excuse for beating about twenty boys at the same time. They came up in relays, and were shared out amongst us amidst scarcely repressed laughter. Kipling had no conception of the sexual significance of *Stalky and Co.*, but no book better illustrates the intense and unhealthy interest created by beating in public schools. I may add that I personally

know boys whose whole development was retarded and lives made miserable by the fixation of their normal erotic impulses at this primitive level.



29 FEBRUARY, 1936

IN a carnal knowledge case that came up at the Cambridge Assizes recently the girl was fourteen years old and the man just under twenty-one. Mr. Justice McKinnon very properly put the man on probation for two years. But in his summing up he made a remark that should not, I think, pass without comment. He said it would not be a bad thing if both these young people might have had "some salutary punishment in a little whipping". We all know the feeling that so-and-so needs a little whipping. But surely it shows an extraordinary lack of imagination on the judge's part to make such a remark to a child of fourteen who was not even a defendant in the case, who had given birth to a child, and had undergone what must have been for a girl of that age (whatever her character) the appalling ordeal of giving detailed evidence to the police and at the trial. And how, in the name of common sense, would whipping help the situation?



14 NOVEMBER, 1936

THE newspaper reports of the "court martial" of a child for an offence on board H.M.S. *Nelson* should reassure Colonel Blimp, who has for some time been worried about the discipline of the sister Service. The chaplain of the *Nelson* said that the "character of this very small boy had deteriorated after he found his mother was in a mental hospital" and that he had been ragged because he was "seen in chapel a lot and saying his prayers". I do not know what his offence was, but he wept bitterly at the court martial, and said:

> People have always laughed at me because of my smallness, and at times I find myself not caring what I do. I never get any letters like other boys, and seem to have no one to think of.

With their unerring instinct about the way to cure children of

misery and loneliness the Admirals very properly sentenced him to twelve strokes of the birch. This should make a sailor of him—if he doesn't commit suicide first.

26 FEBRUARY, 1938

IT is characteristic of the struggle of ideas going on in this country that just as an official Committee is about to report (or so I gather) that there is really nothing at all to be said for retaining corporal punishment as part of a judicial sentence, the Lord Chief Justice passes sentences of twenty and fifteen lashes with the "cat", and magistrates talk of wanting to give young delinquents "a little whipping"—on the public-school model—to begin with. About the Mayfair sentence I want to say two things in answer to a number of letters sent me. If the "cat" is any good at all, these are the sort of men on whom it may fairly be used. But twenty strokes—which means, with an instrument with nine tails, the infliction of 180 deep wounds—is torture as indelible as branding. Secondly, the question of cruelty is not the main issue; corporal punishment is to be condemned, not on any ground of sentiment, but on the ground that it makes reclamation of the criminal impossible and does not, in fact, deter criminals. The coming report, I hear, is in favour of retaining the "cat" only as a punishment for violent prisoners who attack warders in gaol. I had a very illuminating talk the other day with an experienced prison official who had seen the "cat" and birch inflicted on many occasions and who agreed that its effect on the warders and on the prison as a whole is deplorable. He said that there was some case for keeping corporal punishment as a deterrent against violence to warders, but that was because it was difficult in our present prison system otherwise to find any punishment sufficiently bad to frighten the tough prisoner. He agreed that if we abolished the prison system and substituted a vigorous and hard-working camp life for the iron and stone prison, we could also abolish the cat because the threat of prison would be a sufficiently deterring punishment.

13 MAY, 1939

"LADIES, ladies, I appeal to your reason . . ." Captain Osbert Peake of the Home Office appealed in vain. The ladies were not interested

in reason or in facts; they were 3,000 delegates of the Women's Conservative and Unionist Associations, screaming for the retention of the "cat". A lady M.F.H. had called flogging the only way of preserving their children from assault, so why should they listen to expert opinion? But was it flogging as a deterrent that they wanted or flogging for its own sake? The Conservative ladies could not have shown more excitement if they had been reading Sacher-Masoch or the Marquis de Sade. Lady Astor, like Captain Peake, was howled down, and she found only ten delegates to support her against flogging.

Note. A similar scene took place at the Conservative Party Conference at Blackpool in 1958.



24 MAY, 1947

WHENEVER the subject of corporal punishment is raised, hearty public-school men come forward to tell us with pride just how many times they were flogged at school, and how satisfactory a form of punishment it was; how they themselves in turn became the floggers and how in both capacities they found the relations of flogger and floggee full of mutual respect and cordiality. Sometimes they even seem to think that they learned from caning a sense of right and wrong, or at least of justice and injustice. On this point I should have said that the real advantage was that they carried from school into an unjust world a useful lesson that it is necessary to bear much injustice without complaint. I agree, of course, that where corporal punishment is as much part of the tradition as it is at the older public schools, there is no element of "humiliation" such as the opponents of corporal punishment often allege. The attitude in less elevated establishments is different. The cane is simply the overtaxed master's way of keeping order in classes which are too large for serious education. If corporal punishment in day schools, where punishment is usually given on the hand, were of comparable severity to that which is administered by prefects and masters in public schools, there would be riots and deputations of indignant parents. It is well to get these facts right, or else the discussion about the efficacy of caning as a method of school discipline gets confused. One other distinction seldom made is, I believe, of great importance. As the agitation against corporal punishment grows, so there is a tendency to reserve

it for "serious offences". This makes matters far worse. There is a case for the occasional use of the cane for boys between, shall we say, the ages of nine and fourteen, provided that it is used on the spot without malice and for the purpose of making a naughty boy understand that if he is persistently and wilfully late and impertinent, if he throws ink about and generally disturbs the whole class, he is liable to get hurt. But for serious offences corporal punishment is the most useless thing in the world. Caning never made a liar truthful, a dirty-minded boy chaste or a thief honest.

There is another side to this subject which those of us who come from public schools usually know about but seldom mention. Rousseau was only the first to confess that his first sex stimulation came from being whipped by a governess. The slight embarrassment and sniggering tone that creep into every discussion of this subject are in themselves evidence that it brings with it a whole train of sexual images. Those who placard our cities with pictures of half-naked women carrying whips are experienced advertisers who know what will attract attention. I recall Berlin in the period immediately before the Nazis, when the shops were full of books on flagellation and when prostitutes wearing high boots differentiated themselves from their more feminine rivals. In more decorous England, no pornographic shop is complete without several well-illustrated books on flagellation, which the French call *le vice anglais*. It would be interesting to have the evidence of psychiatrists on this point. The regular psychoanalyst will of course come forward with detailed testimony about the part that whipping plays in sexual maladjustment. People will say, however, that he only knows of a few exceptional cases. I believe that many educationists, social workers, medical doctors and others whose business it is to help people in their personal problems, could provide a formidable body of evidence of the psychological harm done to our society by the experience of whipping or the observations of it among young children.

HOMOSEXUALITY

8 APRIL, 1933

SIR ERNEST WILD, the Recorder of London, has recently complained that a man could be given five years for stealing and seven for perjury, but that for a gross act of indecency with a member of the same

sex the most he could get was two years. This, he said, was a most anomalous and indefensible state of affairs that one day might receive the attention of the legislature. I should like to remind Sir Ernest that such acts are not punishable in France and several other civilized countries, and that, apart from actual sodomy, they were not offences against the law in England till 1885, and then only as the result of a joke of Labouchère's. Such practices between adults are not important to anyone except those who indulge in them; the fact that they are repugnant to me and to most people is not an adequate reason for punishing them, unless they are committed in public or with minors. It is now generally agreed that homosexuality is usually either congenital or acquired in the earliest years of life. When the police are overworked with the increase of crime, it is particularly objectionable that they should waste their time on this type of offence. Recently a policeman dressed up as a sailor at Portsmouth, and then arrested a clergyman for accosting him. One would imagine that our sailors can protect their own virtue without the assistance of *agents provocateurs*. I am told that young policemen, chosen for their good looks, parade Hyde Park in plain clothes with the same object. If this is true, I should like to know how much of the taxpayers' money is wasted in this unnecessary and offensive way.



27 FEBRUARY, 1954

IN the editorial article (October 31st, 1953) which we published on the Law and Homosexuality, it was suggested first that the law was now shockingly out of date and known to be so, and secondly, that M.P.s might now be found brave enough to sponsor such an amendment. Our hunch proved justified. A newspaper as cautious and Conservative as the *Sunday Times* came out, immediately afterwards, on the same side, while the B.B.C countenanced a debate on the subject. Neither we, the *Sunday Times*, nor the B.B.C., met with any volume of abuse. Intellectually, the battle is won. Sir Robert Boothby, who had taken the chief part in the B.B.C. debate, has now confirmed the second part of our prophecy. An M.P. has come out flat and fair against the existing law. In his speech last Friday to the Hardwicke Society, he quoted the opinion of Sir Travers Humphreys, that Section Two of the Criminal Law Amendment

Act might be called the Blackmailer's Charter. He argued, as we have done, that there must be laws against public indecency, and against such public annoyance as soliciting and importuning, and that the young must be defended by the enactment of an age limit below which any homosexual approach must be regarded as seduction or rape, and severely punished as such. With these provisos, there can be no more rational case for maintaining prison as a punishment for homosexual practice between consenting adult males than there is between lesbian women. I hope and believe there will be other M.P.s plucky enough to follow Sir Robert's lead.



27 FEBRUARY, 1954

HERE is an odd example of the primitive reaction that is liable to be induced when the homosexual issue crops up. The *Daily Telegraph* of February 18th carried a report that eight boys from Saltersford Senior Approved School, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, were sentenced at Chester Assizes on charges of gross indecency or attempted gross indecency. Three of them, whose ages range from sixteen to eighteen, were sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, two to six months, and three were bound over for three years. There may, of course, have been other aspects in this case which were not reported. But, as a correspondent writes to me, what could justify gaol sentences on five boys between sixteen and eighteen "for activities that have gone on pretty well non-stop for many generations in our most famous public schools. Only, notice, a charge of 'gross indecency', not even 'serious offence'! This does seem like one law for the rich and another for the poor." My correspondent certainly makes a strong point. How many of the magistrates, M.P.s, and other public-school men, who get hot under the collar on this subject, ought, at some period in their boyhood, to have gone to prison if these sentences are justified?



17 DECEMBER, 1955

THE doctors—would you believe it?—have actually agreed about homosexuality in their long and careful memorandum to the Home

Office Departmental Committee. They point out that official knowledge and decisions on the subject are at present based on the few cases that get into court and consulting-rooms; public information is "derived from prisons and institutions and mentally deranged persons". Rightly they urge the need of wider research, but fortunately do not use this as an excuse for shirking proposals based on the special knowledge they possess as doctors. The profession at last admits the existence of congenital homosexuality as distinct, for instance, from lifelong habits originally formed in adolescence. Their report is balanced and humane: it turns attention to the unknown multitude of homosexuals who are not known ever to have committed a homosexual act, in spite of the appalling difficulty the genuine homosexual must have every day of his life. Do we, normal people, ask ourselves how long we should keep out of gaol if it was an offence for us to show any interest in the other sex although we were normally expected to mix with them freely in bedrooms, bathrooms and lavatories? The present law, the B.M.A. evidence points out, has many bad effects; it increases fear, nervous tension and blackmail. The one advantage claimed for it—the protection of the young—must be maintained in the case of males just as it is in that of girls. If—as rational judgment and the experience of civilized foreign countries suggests would be wise—homosexual practice among consenting adults is no longer to be punished, then the doctors, rightly, I think, suggest twenty-one as the "age of consent".

OBSCENITY

13 FEBRUARY, 1932

ON Monday last Mr. de Montalk, a New Zealander of Polish descent, was sentenced by Sir Ernest Wild, the Recorder of London, to six months' imprisonment in the second division, after a jury had found him guilty of "uttering and publishing an obscene libel". The case raises issues of very great importance. Let me first state the facts shortly. De Montalk is a poet who takes his work seriously. (He has published two or three books which have been praised by very competent critics.) He took copies of half a dozen poems, including a translation of Rabelais's well-known poem in which a lady arms her husband for battle, and a savage attack on Verlaine, to a printer. The poems contained several words not usually—though occasionally

—printed. The printer first boggled at printing them on the ground of obscenity and then, when Mr. de Montalk had gone, took the poems to the police. It will be seen that "uttering and publishing" are in this case purely technical: no one had seen the poems, except the printer, until he summoned the police—by now twelve jurymen, the police, solicitors, counsel and Sir Ernest Wild have all been in danger of depravation. It was stated in court that Mr. de Montalk did not intend to publish the poems; he only wished them in type for convenience of circulation among a few friends.

Now the serious point is this. Is it the business of the police or of the courts to protect literature against defilement before it is, in the usual sense, published? The usual defence of our law of obscene libel is that it checks the sale of pornography. Probably most people in this country are in favour of some restriction on grounds of public decency. But I have never heard anyone defend the strict application of the present law. Its scope is indefensibly wide and we only retain it because our authorities usually show discretion in applying it. It is technically an obscene libel to post a letter which includes an "obscene" word (the words commonly regarded as obscene change with each generation) and, as we have seen in this case, it is technically an obscene libel to take such words to a printer. Obviously the law is in this case reduced to an absurdity. No one's morals were corrupted, no one's sense of decency outraged, no innocent youth contaminated. Therefore, the whole case for applying the law, as defended by its more intelligent advocates, falls to the ground. I hope there will be an appeal and the real issues of liberty and censorship—very far-reaching ones—will be fully discussed when Mr. de Montalk's case is again considered.



22 MAY, 1954

THE Home Office, as well as Scotland Yard and the Director of Public Prosecutions, has a staff of what might be called anti-publishers' readers. My guess is that the current spate of "obscene" book prosecutions is largely due to their diligent reading, though it is fair to say that what usually sets them in motion is a complaint from some member of the public. Whatever the merits or morals of the three books now subject to proceedings in the Courts—Werner

Laurie's *Julia*, Secker and Warburg's *The Philanderer*, and Hutchinson's *September in Quinze*—I hope that a fight will be put up at some stage. When a publisher pleads guilty to this offence of "selling, uttering and publishing an obscene libel", as Werner Laurie's did on Tuesday at Clerkenwell Magistrates' Court, it may be taken to mean, not that the publisher repents and is ashamed, but that he can't afford to fight unknown odds. From that point the usual (and perennially unsuccessful) defences of redemption by literary merit and non-access by the corruptible become mere pleas in mitigation of sentence. Prosecution becomes nine points of conviction, and officialdom is confirmed in uncontrolled power. The Obscene Publications Act, 1857, was intended by its author, Lord Campbell, to apply only to what he called "works written *for the single purpose* of corrupting the morals of youth and of a nature calculated to shock the common feelings of decency in any well-regulated mind". It was Lord Cockburn who, in Hicklin's case nine years later, discovered that it was intended to apply to anything with a "tendency" to "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall". We should be much better served if we could even get back to Lord Campbell's standard.



14 AUGUST, 1954

I WAS still in Wales when I read the remarkable tale of the Swindon Bench and the *Decameron*; and I recall particularly the report in the *Daily Sketch* of the statement made after the case by one of the magistrates who had tried it, Mr. David Bedwin ("a grocer . . . a local Methodist lay preacher . . . he is unmarried"). "We members of the Bench," said Mr. Bedwin, "were all aware that this book was considered to be a classic. But we have thrashed the matter out and given our verdict . . ." What, then, could have been more delightful than to find waiting for me on my return the following witty and irreverent comment from Reginald Reynolds?

At Swindon there dwells a fastidious creature,
One Bedwin (unmarried) a local lay preacher,
A Methodist Daniel—one of the Trinity
Measuring books by the law of Bedwinity.

He scorns the opinions of gaffer and gammer on
The alien bawd who contrived the Decameron,
So tremble you Wops with no dulce decorum—
The Rubicon's crossed by the Pons Asinorum.



25 SEPTEMBER, 1954

THE odd thing about the Hutchinson "obscene libel" case at the Old Bailey last Friday is that a novel (*September in Quinze*) that the Recorder considered "repugnant to every decent emotion" should have been reviewed, with no such strictures, by the *Observer*, the *Lady*, the *Queen*, *Britannia and Eve*, and *John O'London's Weekly*. Not that these reviews ever got before the jury. Mr. Frank Milton, who took the preliminary proceedings at Marlborough Street on July 26th, and decided that the case must go before a jury, held that the reviews were admissible as showing what kind of readers the novel might be expected to reach. Last Friday the Recorder held that they were not. Mr. Richard Church was in court to say that he wrote the *John O'London* notice—and got as far as saying it in the witness box, but was not allowed to repeat what he had written. (Mr. Church, by the way, had to listen in the witness box to a fifteen-minute argument about his own admissibility, and no one offered him a chair.) In the event the jury found the book "obscene". It's a compendious word, to judge from the company in which some of our reputable publishers are now being pilloried. If you want to start a really lively conversation at the dinner table ask someone to define obscenity.



23 OCTOBER, 1954

OF all the criminal cases that can end in a jury's failure to agree on a verdict, you might think that the charge of publishing an obscene libel was one in which the prosecution should then be dropped. Mr. Justice Devlin made it plain, in his summing-up in the case of *The Image and the Search*, that whereas the jury must take their law from him entirely, the facts of the case were in the book itself. "And we've both read the book," he said. "This is not a case where I ought to express an opinion—there are twelve of you to do that,

and I'm not going to be the thirteenth voice." Indeed there was not the possibility, unavoidable in so many criminal cases, that any juror could have been wrongly seized of the facts: last week they all went home with the book under their arms, and there are no other facts in the case. On Monday they considered their verdict for five hours; and the jurors, whoever they were, who thought *The Image and the Search* was not such a book as to "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall" still remained of that opinion at the end. Why can't the Director of Public Prosecutions accept that? There is to be a new trial, and the whole process will be repeated from the beginning with twelve more unsuspecting rate-payers. If a jury, which is the law's own ideal of a cross-section of the public, can't agree to condemn a book that has been highly praised, why go on calling other juries until you get a combination that will?

MISCELLANEOUS

20 NOVEMBER, 1954

IT was not until I visited the National Union of Teachers' exhibition of Comics that I knew that they include illustrations showing how to hang your cat or slice your dog into ribbons with a jack-knife. Amongst other novelties displayed were editorial articles in the Comics telling you to buy as many "morbid" and horror issues as quickly as possible because "do-gooders" and fuddy-duddies were trying to suppress them. All the Comics, good, bad or indifferent, shown in this exhibition have been collected by teachers in urban schools; they have not apparently yet penetrated England's green and pleasant countryside. Teachers who want to distract children's minds in the direction of their classwork are apt to confiscate Comics read during lesson time. This, I learn from a report in *The Schoolmaster*, raises an interesting legal point. Apparently teacher may safely impound Comics in class, but may find that they have to be returned later. (I cannot remember that this rule used to be applied to catapults when I was at school.) I see that the Executive of the N.U.T. have decided to support Parliamentary measures to deal with "Horror Comics", provided that "such legislation does not involve the country in a narrow and dangerous censorship threaten-

ing the vital freedom of thought and expression". But I doubt if we need discuss the legislative problem; the first step is to find whether such Comics, clearly produced for children, do not come within the present law of obscenity which says nothing about sex but only about a tendency to deprave and corrupt minds open to such influences. I find it hard to take seriously comparisons between those concentrated nightmares of torture, horror and sadism with Victorian illustrations of Dickens or the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and I should have thought it not difficult to show that prolonged and intense brooding over them did tend to deprave and corrupt adolescent minds.



25 FEBRUARY, 1933

"TRUTH," said Mr. Justice McCardie in his Galton Lecture addressed to the Eugenics Society last week, "is greater than false modesty", and he proceeded in measured but unshrinking terms to tell the truth about our divorce laws, to deal with the "repulsive activities" of the King's Proctor, the evils of inherited defect, and the subjects of birth control and the sterilization of the unfit, and to urge the amendment of the abortion laws. As I was a guest on this occasion I looked with some interest at the papers next morning to see how his speech was reported. Truth had not had a chance against false modesty. *The Times* referred only to his remarks on divorce reform and summarized them in an obscure corner; several big circulation papers splashed his remarks about the King's Proctor; one or two also made a bare reference to the fact that he had discussed birth control and sterilization. None, as far as I was able to see, so far conquered false modesty as to mention the word abortion. The public, one supposes, is considered too squeamish to read the remarks of one of His Majesty's judges speaking with the authority of forty years' experience of the unnecessary suffering he has himself seen inflicted by the law as it stands today.



28 AUGUST, 1937

I KNEW, or thought I knew, what the Licensing Acts used to mean by a *bona fide* traveller, entitled at the price of some walking exercise

to a Sabbath drink, but what constitutes a *bona fide* railway traveller? I ask because I do not know whether I have committed, or been party to, a crime. The other night, at about 10 o'clock taking a short cut to a friend's house through Victoria Station, I came across a fruiterer's shop open and offering for sale some delectable plums, a basket of which I thought I would buy as a present for my friend. When I sought to make the purchase, the shopkeeper directed my attention to a notice: "Open for the convenience of Southern Railway passengers only." As he firmly declined to advise me on means of becoming a legal passenger, I took myself to the suburban booking office, and requested "A cheap ticket, to buy plums, please." In the end I paid 2d. for a third single to Battersea Park. Thus legalized I bought my plums under the nose of an unsmiling policeman, who looked at, but did not scrutinize, my ticket. Was my action indictable? And, if so, on what grounds? False pretences, jactitation, or what? I am no criminal lawyer; but I have never been to Battersea Park and I did get my plums.



29 DECEMBER, 1945

CRIMES of violence are usually common in the aftermath of a great war in which habituation to killing has dulled the sensibilities and loosed the normal restraints of civilized men. In the present "crime wave", however, which is making press headlines, burglaries and thefts seem to be the outstanding breaches of the law. One big factor is indisputably the existence of an "underground" consisting of some ten thousand deserters from the Services. Lacking identity cards and ration-books—unless they have managed to buy forgeries—these men dare not approach a Labour Exchange for respectable employment. Picking up casual dead-end jobs "with no questions asked", and feeding always in the less reputable sort of café, they drift from petty thieving into becoming recruits for organized "gangs". I should like seriously to suggest to the authorities that a general amnesty for deserters would be the best cure for the "crime wave". In the majority of cases "desertion" began by a man's overstaying his leave—sometimes with reasonable excuse. Frightened of the "glass-house", he would put off returning to his unit until there was nothing for it, in wartime, but to go "on the run" as a posted

deserter. Even in cases where cowardice was the real motive, is punishment now worth while? Except for men chargeable with civil crimes while "underground", I should wipe the slate clean.

8 FEBRUARY, 1947

THERE are about 16,000 deserters loose in England, of whom it is estimated that some 10,000 probably want to get genuine ration books and return to normal life. Nothing much can be done, I suppose, about the remaining 6,000; some of them will gradually fall into the hands of the authorities. But it is socially imperative that the other 10,000 should be persuaded to give themselves up. The recent Government offer is obviously ineffective. Some correspondents write suggesting a complete amnesty. This seems to me a little too simple. Men who have stuck on in bad conditions in the Forces will have a very serious grouse if deserters who have been at large for years now get off scot free. One suggestion is to set up special tribunals to deal with their cases; maximum penalties would be laid down, and every deserter would know that he would not appear before an old-fashioned court martial with no one present to examine his particular circumstances. A better proposal to my mind is to announce that no punishment will be inflicted for desertion, but that men who now give themselves up will be required to serve a further period of a year, or, in bad cases, of two years, in the Forces. In that case other soldiers would be released more quickly and I doubt if anyone would have any serious grouse. No soldiers will want deserters "punished", but they will object violently to deserters obtaining priority in release. My proposal then is an amnesty from all prison sentences and a further period in army service with the usual rights of promotion.

29 MARCH, 1947

"THE succession of bullets which you fired into your stepfather," said one of H.M. Judges the other day to a man convicted of manslaughter, "indicates to me that this is a case of some gravity." As an accepted feature of our legal system, the judicial homily is perhaps a difficult art; one of those in which a false note can be fatal to dignity. Some think it a gratuitous assumption of responsibility, and

favour the brevity of the magisterial "forty shillings, please". Others feel that if a man is going to prison, or is about to be discharged on probation when he expected to go to prison, the fact should be communicated to him with more solemnity than can be extracted from the appropriate clause in a statute. As it is, although the delivery of the homily can sometimes be an embarrassing occasion in a waiting court, it has enriched legal reminiscence in the qualities of "This England". Most people have heard the one about the duck-thief: "Here you are, an able-bodied man with all the advantages of a secondary-school education—instead of which you go about the country stealing ducks." But I prefer an involved essay in the superlative that was delivered (I am told) at the Old Bailey by the late Mr. Commissioner Kerr in sentencing a man for embezzlement: "If ever there was a worse case," he said, "of a man systematically robbing his master, that case is this case."



3 MAY, 1947

ONE or two points about the gangster hold-up, in which an unfortunate motor-cyclist was killed, seem clear enough even though a lot of the relevant facts are not yet known. These armed thieves, probably deserters living by crime, do not appear to be gangsters after the American model. If there is truth in the newspaper reports of the events in Tottenham Court Road, they seem to have been amateurs who were scared into flight by opposition and covered their retreat by wild shooting. Unhappily, one man was killed, but the hold-up failed and, if the men are caught, the net effect will be deterrent. I remember being told that after the last war, when similar conditions existed, the resistance of one man who refused to take orders at the revolver's point was a decisive factor in checking gangsterism. If, at an early stage, Chicago citizens had refused to be intimidated, then Al Capone could never have organized his racket. Public courage is the first necessity in preventing organized gangsterism. The second is an efficient police force and an honest judicial machine. Here, too, we are more fortunate than the United States. Another essential factor is that there should be the greatest difficulty in obtaining firearms. This, I think, is the case now; unfortunately, it was terribly easy to get revolvers in the period immediately after

the war. Lastly, it is essential that the police should not be armed. I know it is hard for unarmed constables in some cases, but the more intelligent of them agree with students of crime that, once the police are armed, then men who would not otherwise run the risk of swinging also begin to carry arms. In that case, you get just that type of shooting match which must at all costs be prevented. No factor has been so important in keeping Britain's record of comparative public decency and order than the fact that our police are an unarmed civilian body.



7 JANUARY, 1950

ASSAULTING Eros has now become a recognized sport for rowdy nights, like putting a pot on the top of the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford. The difference, however, is that Eros is fragile, while no one, as far as I know, has ever succeeded in breaking the Martyrs' Memorial. It is an innovation which produces some ridiculous situations. At 3 o'clock on New Year's morning, for instance, Eros was invisible behind a wooden covering that served as a kind of chastity belt, which was itself further protected from assault by a solid guard, three deep, of yawning policemen. No one else was to be seen in Piccadilly, but one cannot accuse the authorities of waste, for it was later still, I'm told, that some student parties ended and that one daring spirit did succeed in partial penetration.



14 FEBRUARY, 1953

I HAVE been reading a manuscript written by an elderly man recently discharged from Wandsworth Prison. It contains a chapter on the "three-in-a-cell" system that must be one of the first accounts to be written from personal experience of what he calls "this disgusting and indefensible measure". (No one tries to defend it, so far as I know, least of all the Prison Commissioners, who condemn it year after year in their Report.) It is true, he says, that a minority of prisoners don't object to close confinement with two others, sharing smokes, library books, and talk; but "by putting three criminals in one cell for eighteen hours out of every twenty-four the authorities

are providing them with opportunities for ganging-up and the practice of sundry perversions. When I was in Pentonville," he goes on, "I was in a single cell, and consequently subject to the silence rule: if I spoke a single word to the men in the cells on either side of me, I was liable to be punished. Yet in the same prison I spent several weeks in one of the abominable cells-for-three, where there was absolutely no restrictions on talking." Moreover, "the weather was sultry, and the single window was very high up—only two panes could be opened. In winter, they told me, the conditions were just bearable; in summer they are horrible, especially at night-time, when the atmosphere becomes nauseating." The one-man cell was once thought by the religious to offer an opportunity for repentance and reform, and by the Benthamites to be utilitarian, economical and sanitary. Prisons were built accordingly, and solitary confinement became the worst feature of our prison system. Crowding three men into each cell, however, is a step back towards the bad old "common gaols", the floor space per man being less even than it was then. Building prisons is never likely to be a popular measure, but today it is a very serious need.



25 JUNE, 1955

I'VE often nodded approval at the suggestion that all magistrates should visit the prisons now and again, to see for themselves what happens to the adult offenders they sentence. But what then? The implication, no doubt, is that they may pass fewer sentences of imprisonment, and cast about for alternatives. What alternatives? Probation is often unsuitable. Prolonged bail—several months, for example, followed by discharge with a caution, which used to be a favourite with some of the Metropolitan Magistrates—is no longer lawful. The "suspended sentence"? I rather favour this, and it seems to work well enough in Continental countries, and I have yet to be told why we don't experiment with it here. As for the short prison sentence, it must be half a century since we seriously reconsidered whether it could not be abolished in the case of many non-violent offenders. In any case, can't we do any new thinking before we embark on a new prison-building programme? What is the use, for example, of locking up debtors, wife-maintenance and affiliation

cases, wiping out the debts and leaving the wives and mothers unprovided for? The Scots seem to get along very well with their system of attachment of wages. And what is the use of seven days in gaol for chronic drunks, or for the very old, convicted of the offences so often attributable to senility? I can't believe that prison is the best we can do in this day and age, or that we are all too busy and conventional to inquire into it all.

Part Six
AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

ABROAD

7 APRIL, 1951

IT rained most of the week-end in Paris; but rain is less wet in France because the wine is cheaper. The temperature was not much above freezing point; but it was not so cold as in England because the wine is cheaper. The food is nicer, if more expensive, than in England; but one is not ruined by the cost of a good meal because the wine is cheaper. The cars are not more high-powered, nor the girls prettier; but the traffic goes faster and the girls are more attractive because the wine is cheaper.

15 JANUARY, 1938

How did the philosopher come to think that man is an animal that seeks pleasure and avoids pain? I put this question to an unknown warrior, as side by side we toiled with a contorted crab-like motion up a frozen mountain in a biting wind, only to slide down again in a helpless tangle to the accompaniment of the caustic comments of an attendant demon. Pleasure? There can be no pleasure so hardly won, so austere, so dangerously indistinguishable from pain as ski-ing. If you do not sprain your ankle (as I did early in the proceedings) you break your leg, and if you do chance to keep your limbs whole, you still pass long hours of humiliating and painful effort in very uncomfortable circumstances, when you might be spending your week's holiday at much less cost, reading or sleeping by a warm fire, with a cat curled up on the mat . . . Man is a masochistic animal.

No, ski-ing is not a pleasure (though to be honest I must admit that I love it). It is a religion—one of the fashionable (winter) religions of our time. Its discipline, its humiliations, its austerities are, I am sure, part of its attraction. In these days the bourgeoisie seek not comfort, but something that makes them feel violently alive and something in which they run risks—mild ones preferably—under orders. (There is an excellent doctor with a most up-to-date X-ray machine in his surgery waiting at the bottom of the run, where you can take your broken bones.) They like the routine of ski-ing too. One must be at one's lesson by 10 o'clock in the morning; it is with

a praiseworthy effort that one lasts until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. All day long the nursery slopes ring with the stern cry of the officiating priest, "Ben' ze knees, lady! More ben' ze knees, lady." And bend the knees they do, these ardent devotees who have long ceased to bow in any other place of worship. Afterwards there are compensations: the glow that comes from effort; the fashionable tan that does not look natural when put on with lotion; the dances in the evening; the hope that on return to London or Budapest other less exciting ways of slimming will be unnecessary. And then it gives one quite a lot to talk about, too. Why, the dear Duchess will be out there next week; the Countess X only left a few days ago; and Schiaparelli, with her attendant dachshund, was to be seen passing daily in the most wonderful grey trousers and long brilliant orange gloves.



17 APRIL, 1943

"KAIROUAN in flames." The headline evokes a flood of memories. The crowded lanes just wide enough for a loaded mule to pass; the Arabs who sold rugs and brass pans or who would sit all day to show the occasional European a selection of gorgeous carpets while they served cups of Turkish coffee and talked of the ill state of the land; the little square where we bought for a few pence the sort of earthen pitcher which the woman of Samaria carried to the well. Under my feet now is a carpet that I bought with a sense of triumph that is not at all diminished by the knowledge that if I had had more patience and drunk more coffee and known more about Oriental methods I should have got it a couple of pounds cheaper. The man who sold these splendid rugs and carpets was a Destourian, an Arab nationalist, who did us the almost incredible favour of inviting us to his home for tea and after a surprising meal, eaten off a table tricked out with tawdry finery from the West (mats and crockery of the "present from Brighton" variety), took us into the woman's quarters and introduced us to his wife. This was not the only sign that the harem was astir. Next day, outside the great mosque, a veiled woman stopped D. and beckoned her aside. For a moment she uncovered her face and whispered: "Tell the women in your country that we too shall soon be free as you are."

The mosque itself is one of the most ancient and splendid of the Arab world. A fountain I remember stands in the great square, and

round it are patterns made of indentations of varying sizes. If you have faith or imagination you can believe the story they tell you that these holes are the footsteps of all the animals whose labour was used in building the mosque. According to this legend the large indentations are the marks of the hoofs of camels and horses, the smaller those of mules and asses and perhaps of sheep and goats.

One more memory of Kairouan. In an inconspicuous house we saw the plate of an organization corresponding to our Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This society was organized by a remarkable French woman who I remember meeting in Tunis. Nowhere is such a society more needed than in the Mediterranean, where the notion of treating beasts with humanity (in distinction to dedicating fountains to generations centuries dead) has never penetrated very far. Soon after seeing that plate we watched one of the most primitive of sights—the man with the camel engaged in the incredibly wasteful method of land irrigation. A camel was harnessed to a contrivance which filled a skin with water from a well. When the skin was full the camel went up the slope, with the man shouting by his side. At the top of the slope the skin was upset and the water ran down in an earthen channel; a little each time reached the tilled ground below. Each time the camel turned with his load the man jabbed him viciously between the legs with a jagged pointed stick. We watched and turned away disgusted. The need for education both in irrigation and in kindness to animals was certainly apparent. Later that evening we saw something which did not modify this conviction but which did suggest that nothing short of the jab of a sharp stick in the testicles is likely to cause much pain to a camel. Outside the walls a group of camels were having a meal of prickly pear. Now the spikes on prickly pear are to my knowledge as sharp and nearly as strong as needles. (I learnt that first in South Africa, where as a boy I shared in the odd occupation of burning off these prickles before cutting up the juicy leaves to feed to ostriches.) But the camels seemed not to notice the spikes. They ate the leaves, spikes and all, as if they were bread and butter.



10 JUNE, 1950

ON the top of the rocky hill behind the hotel we found a hermit. He had built a little stone cabin for himself and he had some almond

trees. In patches, each a few feet square, he had cleared away the rocks and planted tomatoes, spinach, marrows, beans, and half a dozen other vegetables. Though there was a rainwater tank which would be full for part of the year, he had in the summer no water that he did not himself carry up. The sun beat down mercilessly. Every baby marrow and tomato seedling had built for it a little house made of the fleshy leaves of the ubiquitous cactus. The leaves were propped against each other on the pattern of the card houses we learn to make in the nursery. Each plant was watered from an ordinary bedroom carafe. Minute tomatoes were already showing on plants nine inches high. We communicated badly but intimately, exchanging French, English and Italian names of all the plants. Then we learnt that he had had three brothers killed in the war, one in Africa, one somewhere on the Russian front, and one in Italy. His mother, he said, had never got over it and died soon after the war. He was not voluble like the waiter, but more impressive. He said, quite simply, once again using the only adjective that a visiting Englishman could be expected to understand, "Guerra non buona." He was a sad but not an unhappy man, and he overflowed with tender pride and enthusiasm when he showed us his marrow seedlings. He was, after all, much better off than the usual Southern Italian or Sicilian peasant working from dawn till dusk for an idle absentee landowner, who still believes that he can rely on de Gasperi's police and the neo-Fascist party to prevent the common people taking over the land with which indeed they and their ancestors "have mixed their labour". I talked about the revolt of the *contadini* with a policeman as we crossed the ferry over the straits of Messina. He had been a prisoner of war in Scotland and had been prevented by the priests, he said, from bringing home his Scottish sweetheart as his wife. He was very emphatic about the *contadini* "They are not Communists," he said, "they want to eat."



31 JANUARY, 1953

I HAD an instructive stroll the other day in the Calcutta Maidan—a large open space which fulfils all the functions of Hyde Park and serves as a public convenience as well. I fell into talk with an Indian who spoke good English and he walked with me from group to

group. A crowd had gathered round one hairy speaker in pink robes who had recently bathed in the Ganges and was rattling castanets and chanting a hymn to the god Rama with the audience joining in the responses. Next to him a patent-medicine merchant had a score of mineral and herbal cures neatly set out in squares and he was dispensing a mixture which he declared was a sovereign remedy for all stomach troubles. I was more perplexed by the next group which pored over some writing on the ground and the picture of a woman, about which the salesman was apparently giving a learned discourse. He, I discovered, was selling virility tablets. Finally, I saw a circle within which a beautifully caparisoned bull was gently walking about in obedience to his master's voice. He was a curly, mild animal, well-fed and very unlike most Indian cattle. I gathered from friends that his act is traditional in India; it was new to me. His master announced that the bull would point out a man who had two annas in his hand, and, sure enough, a few minutes later, he was rubbing his nose against the sleeve of a member of the crowd who had no alternative but to part with the two annas. "Oh!" said my Indian friend, as the man started to speak again, "the bull is now going to find someone who has recently come from a journey overseas." It needed no intuition on my part to guess what this meant. Sure enough, the bull came up to me most politely and nodded his head three times in my direction. His master got another two annas.



6 FEBRUARY, 1954

I KNOW of no other creature which lives on the same terms with man as the lizard. I don't mean big creatures such as the monitor, which Julian Huxley tried to lassoo with his garter, and carried home in triumph by its tail; I mean the small lizards that one sees all over the verandas, paths and gardens in the tropics. Since they don't eat or mess the food like mice, and are not good to eat like frogs or birds, nor vicious like snakes, they don't arouse either the greed or the animosity of human beings. Africans are completely indifferent to them. They will wait until you are within a few inches of them before disappearing like a flick of a whiplash. Follow them to one of those pillars that support the veranda in every British bungalow, and in a trice you see them looking down at you with unwinking and

untroubled eyes from the roof, or, possibly, staring up at you from the garden below. They seem to grow from an inch to more than a foot long. In the house where I stayed in Accra, we threw down food for them on the veranda. When they saw the food, they came skidding along the tiled floor of the veranda as if they were on skis, ending with a neat christie in front of a piece of bread or vegetable. The big male, properly named Larry the Lizard, but sometimes, in error, called Leonard or Leopold, had a fine orange head and a grey-black body, with an orange and bright blue tail. His favourite wives were named Lizzie and Gertie. Other members of the harem waited their turn for meals. I particularly enjoyed watching Larry's courtship. He came all across the veranda, advancing sideways; she side-stepped as well. When he was close to her, he would sit up, resting his weight on his front legs, rather in the manner of a boy doing that up-and-down exercise that is supposed to be good for the stomach muscles. Fascinated, she would stay and watch him while he moved his head up and down in a courteous, but authoritative, manner. Having a great feeling for the proprieties, they would then disappear into the flower-boxes.



2 JUNE, 1956

I'VE never been a self-cooker in the sun, turning like a chicken on a spit, roasting first back and then front, with intervals allowed for basting. As a way of doing absolutely nothing, however, such cooking has its points and I tried it on a week's holiday while Gerald Barry kindly wrote his American Diary. The sea was not as warm as one expects it to be at Monte Carlo in May. Everything was late; it was odd to see the Mediterranean pines lying on the ground where they had been uprooted by the snow. It is surprising what a lot you do if you make up your mind to have a real holiday—which for a journalist means not to read the paper, not to listen to the wireless nor indulge in conversation about public affairs. I came to the conclusion that Grace Kelly (whom I ought now to call Princess Grace) need not be bored. If, like me, she is soon tired of losing money at the Casino and soon gets satisfied with her tan, she can always go and look at the octopuses in the aquarium. (I think the plural should be "octopodes", but the dictionary prefers "octopuses" or

even "octopi"!) This is a wonderful place within a stone's throw of the Palace, better than the Zoo or the Brighton aquarium. She can watch Stirling Moss win the Grand Prix (it's really shocking how these motorists cut in at the corners). She can pay visits to all sorts of interesting people, including Somerset Maugham, who seemed to me in full health and vigour in spite of his recent illness, or go to Vence and call on Gordon Craig, who, at eighty-four, is also full of zest. He might tell her, as he did me, that acting was her proper profession.



28 JULY, 1956

THE sun shone brilliantly at St. Malo on Saturday afternoon; the beach was packed with children and parents playing on the sand. On one side of the bay there is a pile of rock going out to a fort; it was gay with people getting in and out of the water and sunbathing. Looking for a quiet spot I climbed round the fort and found perfect peace and isolation, so solitary that there was no problem about slipping into the water without any bathing clothes. I was dressing when a French schoolboy in a bathing-slip climbed over the rocks near me. We agreed it was a nice day and good for bathing, then hesitatingly he asked if I was staying the night on the fort. If not, perhaps I had better go back. He suggested it was unnecessary for me to put on my trousers. Five minutes later I saw what he meant. The tide comes in fast on the Britanny coast, and between me and the sandy safety of St. Malo there stretched a couple of hundred yards of water waist-high. The population on the shores saw a strange spectacle. Aphrodite, when she rose from the foam, was dressed, as far as I remember, in nothing but seaweed. But they saw a white-haired gentleman, wearing a tweed coat, the tail of which hung in the water while the waves lapped gently over his Aertex underpants, and carrying his trousers like a banner before him. Nor was this sea deity unattended. For a charming acolyte preceded him bearing his shoes and socks. Polite as always, the French crowd of holiday-makers forbore to cheer but not to laugh as I stepped with simple dignity ashore.

THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

Of many entries in Critic's Diary about the destruction of the countryside I begin this section with one which was actually written by Leonard Woolf, because it was this hideous house (not on the skyline and not now hideous) which I acquired in 1954 and in which I now live.

18 JUNE, 1932

I REFERRED the other day to the spoiling of the countryside west of London. Due south of London the country is being attacked from every side, and in a few years' time, if the thing goes on at its present pace, there will be nothing for the eye to rest upon between the Thames and the sea but smug, red-brick suburbanity and the corrugated iron and reinforced concrete of factories. An instance of this destruction may be seen in the valley of the Ouse between Lewes and Newhaven. Until yesterday these water-meadows in the gap between the downs were one of the most beautiful places within sixty miles of London. It is true that the crowning horror of Peacehaven lay only three or four miles away, but it was happily invisible from any spot in the great stretch of valley and downland. Now the destruction has begun. Last year a gentleman bought a few acres of land and built a hideous house on the skyline on the top of the downs to the west. On the east a cement works have been started. One of the most beautiful hollows in the downs has been destroyed. A gigantic building has been put up in the centre of the valley and now dominates everything. When I complain or lament I am told that it is unreasonable to object to industrial development. But why should a company which wants to develop cement be allowed to dump its buildings in a spot which destroys the beauty of many square miles of country? Moreover, there is already a large cement works three miles away just outside Lewes, and yet another just outside Newhaven (neither of which have put up buildings which destroy the beauty of the country). Lastly, I am told that we already make more cement than we can find customers for in England.



The Essex Garden 22 AUGUST, 1936

I WOKE up and looked out into the cottage garden. Garden is scarcely the right word, for it implies a cultivated place. This is

rather an orchard, a strip of meadowland, the apple trees weighed down with fruit, red plums gleaming like jewels as the sun breaks through the early morning mist. Not a sound (as the novelists say) except the occasional fall of an apple, reminding one (or not, as the case might be) of Sir Isaac Newton, and all the horrors that his ingenuity has enabled mankind to invent. The place is full of birds; yesterday we saw a goldfinch, a fly-catcher, a family of cole tits, a tree creeper, and that uncommon bird, the common bunting. A butcher bird passed by the day before to recall to the sentimentalist that it is only to men that wild nature is peaceful.



7 MARCH, 1942

SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS promises to scotch the waste now to be seen at dog races and boxing matches. A reader who lives near Altcar sends an example of hare-coursing. He gives a singularly disagreeable account of half-tame hares being chased by dogs, screaming while they make their last desperate turns and then being torn to death. He adds:

> Apart from local noblemen a large proportion of the supporters are farmers of the gentleman type, exempted from military service and running big cars, no doubt on the allowance of petrol granted to them as producers of foodstuffs. One could almost say that they are completely immunized from the effects of the war, excepting, perhaps, that their bank balances are somewhat swollen.
>
> I happened to remark to one of these sporting gentry that it must be a problem to provide food for so many dogs, to which he replied it was certainly more difficult than before the war, particularly so with brandy, which together with the whites of eggs forms a most suitable diet for dogs in training. Without blushing he gave me an approximate canine menu for the day. This included the gravy from stewed beef steak, Benger's Food, tinned chickens' breasts, and new-laid eggs whisked with port wine. All this, to say nothing of the hares which are sacrificed.



25 JULY, 1942

THE most enjoyable day to me was when Mr. Bridges, the builder, came over to do a repair job to the lean-to at the end of the cottage

which had to be adjusted with Bill Parsons' thatching. All day, as they worked, the back-chat went on. Bridges has a small team of workers left; he likes to go round with a carpenter, a mason, and an odd-job boy, and together the four of them will stick to the job till it's finished. "Where do you want this pole to go, Parsons?" calls Mr. Bridges, putting it deliberately in the wrong place so that we may all watch the scorn of the unsuspecting Parsons. Parsons looks cautiously at the pole and then at us. "No," he says, "there ain't room there for the gable to sit proper. Mine's a skilled job, you know," he adds, turning to me. "They always have to ask me," he says. And then he tells a story of how a gentleman near by watched him splitting sprindles. " 'That's a skilled job,' he says to me. 'Yes,' I says. 'Not like old bricklaying that anyone can do after trying a time or two.' " And the laugh is against Bridges. Uncovering the plaster, Bridges, who has a great experience of old houses, tells me he will soon be able to tell me how old my cottage is. Yes, triumphantly he produces some curved bits of ancient bark, holding the laths in place. "Osier pealings," he says. "The house must be four hundred years old and may be eight hundred, so they tell me. Why's that? Because they used the bark of osiers to tie the laths together before they had nails and long after they had nails, too, if nails were expensive or difficult to get in the district. Probably six hundred years ago it means in this district."



3 JUNE, 1944

Two Anglo-American stories. A farmer in a remote corner of southern England said, I'm sure in all good faith, "I gets on well. I like these Americans over here, but I somehow can't get along at all with the white fellows they've got along with them." The second is very simple. An Englishman, seeing a cheerful American, asked, "Why do you Americans all look so cheerful?" The American replied: "Well, you see, we go back to the United States after this show. You have to stay on here."



12 AUGUST, 1944

I NEVER heard a nightingale in better voice, nor do I remember one singing so close to my door. All the garden throbbed with music and I was beginning to think I found in it some of the magic that was

there for Keats, when, suddenly, the bombers came. Scores of them roaring close overhead and others following in quick succession as the earlier flights faded out in the distance. In the quieter intervals I still strained to hear the nightingale; it sang on unperturbed and I heard for a time the perfect symbol of the world at war—the song of the nightingale faintly audible under the deadly drumming of the bombers. When the nightingale flew on to a more distant tree it was not the noise that disturbed her, but my friendly shadow trying to creep a little closer.



3 FEBRUARY, 1945

I WOKE up to find a bat in the bedroom. Why, I asked myself, as I watched its completely silent flight from beam to beam, does having bats in the belfry mean scattiness and has the reason anything to do with the repugnance I feel to catching that bat in my hands and putting it out of the window? I should not feel the same about a bird, and I am sure the repulsion has nothing to do with the vermin that are said to thrive on bats (and which would not thrive on me). Nor has it anything to do with stories of Dracula and bloodsucking vampires. In the end I got up, threw a dressing-gown over the bat as it clung to the wall and carried it out into the snow. I opened the dressing-gown on the ground and was astonished to see what a tiny, appealing slip of a creature it was, sitting (if you can use the word of so strange an anatomy) on the newly fallen snow, with its big ears up, its transparent wings stretched out and its big eyes staring blindly into the cold morning sunshine. The next second it was gone. An exquisite little beast!



16 NOVEMBER, 1946

ANOTHER week, when my mind is more reconciled to the fact that I can no longer run down to Hampshire and spend a week-end talking to Harry Roberts, I may write some more about him. It would be easier to write a book than an article about his remarkable life and character. He was, if you like, a typical rebel, Socialist in his politics just because he was an individualist. But he had none of the

selfishness that we associate with people who insist on living their own type of unconventional life, and none of the boring qualities of the crank. If he seemed to some people cranky, it was just because he was devastatingly sane. By the force of his own affection for other people he created round him a community of unusual happiness. In Stepney he built what was I believe the largest medical practice in the country, and the queues of poor people who waited at his surgery door regarded him with an affection that came near to idolatry. He began his career as a doctor in Cornwall, came up to London, and became friend of almost all the great reformers and Fabians of the later nineteenth century. But he was not and could not be a Fabian. Intellectually he could agree with planning, but he did not like plans, and his interests and achievements were too varied and too individual for him to be a successful politician. He was, incidentally, a first-class authority on gardening; a farmer and a specialist in half a dozen other fields. He was an admirable writer, producing not only a large number of books on medicine, crime, gardens, morals and other subjects, but also contributing regular articles to an astonishing variety of papers, including all the weekly reviews, who so valued his writing that they withdrew their usual objection to his name appearing in the columns of their rivals. Readers of this journal will recall his articles over a long period of years. They sprang from an immense practical experience which was combined with expert technical knowledge. And he could write nothing that was not stamped with a humorous and sensible originality.



21 JUNE, 1947

THE little market town is only an hour and a half from London, and I am not suggesting that there is nothing modern in it. The shop that keeps electric gadgets is positively streamlined. But all the conversations on Saturday morning suggested a growing nostalgia for an earlier age. As I went in to get my tomato plants from a girl, who shows a care for them that others show for babies, I fell into conversation with the blacksmith. In between blows that shaped the piece of a plough he was repairing, he said he had too much work nowadays because no one can get spare parts and every one has to be mended. "A good job," I said, "and independent." "Yes," he

agreed, "but none of the young men will do it. They don't like hard work." He had done it all his life and liked it. Across the road the jeweller showed me a seventeenth-century watch of exquisite workmanship. How exquisite you could not tell until you opened the back and studied the parts that usually only a watchmaker sees. All his family for generations have been watchmakers; it had been made by his great-great-grandfather. And then I called at a saddler's, who was repairing a basket for me with leather because, as he explained, there was no longer a basket-maker about. There might be one in a village some miles away—he wasn't sure if the old fellow still carried on. There used to be two in the town, and in those days ten men were making harness, and now there was only him and one other. Two elderly countrymen were watching him at work. One of them chimed in to describe how there used to be osier beds not far off that kept a man busy cleaning them out. Quite a flourishing trade, basket-making used to be then, he said. And then the other man broke out cursing all machinery. Too much of it, he said. They wasted so much nowadays; when they'd cut the corn no one troubled to rake the field and they ploughed the gleanings in. I can't see that we're any forrader, he said. Perhaps if things got worse we'd go back to horses. As he spoke a farm gig driven by a girl with a shawl over her head came down the street.



25 OCTOBER, 1947

HERE is a true story. It might be called "What's in a Name?" It begins when we received as a present a small yellow kitten which we believed to be female. It had a pretty little face, like a flower, and we christened it accordingly. It settled down on the best of terms with Smudge, playing happily with each batch of her kittens. After some months it displayed incontrovertible signs of being male. When it began to make clumsy advances to Smudge (a tabby-cum-tortoiseshell with a white front) we had great hopes of a basketful of mixed orange and tortoiseshell kittens. Smudge was tolerant of these adolescent attentions, but continued every two months to produce a litter of tabbies, which were only too obviously the offspring of the undistinguished tom across the road. We assumed that time would solve the problem, but it did not. Young marmalade seemed willing to continue to dance attendance without ever

getting to business. Unlike other young toms, he never wandered, but devoted himself to Smudge and her kitten with touching solicitude. Curled up in the same chair or on the same blanket, both washed the kitten and each other indiscriminately and continuously. The trio, mother, kitten and male nurse attendant lying in a single ball of harmony, offered an object lesson of selfless devotion.

This week a loathsome accident occurred. Smudge was killed by a passing motor-bus. The kitten was fortunately just old enough to lap and eat. The yellow tom looks after it as if he were its mother. With a maternal paw he holds it down and washes it from nose to tail, from top to bottom. Never one to venture abroad, he seems willing to cuddle the kitten and sing to it for as many of the twenty-four hours as it will stay still. I can see no male characteristics in this cat. He appears to be without lust, greed, jealousy or ambition. He is content to act as foster-father to the offspring of his first and only love—by another tom.

Re-reading this story I see that I forgot the point. We acted in all innocence, believing the kitten to be female. We had no idea that we were doing it an irreparable injury, that we were putting ideas into its head, when we christened it Pansy.



30 AUGUST, 1947

ONCE again August has exploded two persistent myths about itself. The first is that it is just a wet and cold part of an invariably wet and unsettled British summer. . . . The second myth that dies even harder—though I think Fleet Street has learnt its lessons—is that August is to be treated as the "silly season", when the newspaper reader is supposed to want nothing except innocent gossip about murder and rape and drowning accidents on the South Coast. In fact there is no month in which great events so persistently occur. No need to strain memory for August 1914 or August 1931, or for the beginning of the Spanish war in August 1936 or the Japanese war of 1937 or the Czech crisis in August 1938 or the climax of the German crisis in August 1939. These are only the most obvious examples of the Great August Illusion. Taking it by and large in weather and international and domestic politics, 1947 is about an average August.

29 MAY, 1948

IF I were to judge by the publican next door, the British people are now on the verge of revolt because of the cut of beer. "The Government's gone too far this time," he says, and it is true that there are not so many people in his pub as there were a few months ago. "Stands to reason," he says, "people can't afford it. I can't get rid of it." Just after this conversation I met in the town near by another publican. He was also complaining. But he was troubled not by the price but by the shortage of beer. He was always sold out. The explanation? That the village labourer on sunny evenings now makes a date with his friends, and cycles a couple of miles to the town for a bit of life instead of being satisfied with the local. So we get grumbling at both ends, but little real hardship. The other topic of local gossip was naturally the weather. On Sunday I ate the last of my 1947 apples, ruefully noticing, as I did so, that this year there is scarcely an apple on the trees from which I gathered last year's splendid crop. Very few apples in our area have survived the May frosts. Of course we grumble about this, too. But it is no use grumbling at Providence, and the weather is still the one subject on which the Government cannot be blamed. When scientists control the temperature a sudden drop of 20 degrees such as occurred last week-end would be enough to unseat any Government. Or will it? Perhaps the time will come when no one will distinguish between God and the Prime Minister.

26 JUNE, 1948

HAVING been a motorist for more than twenty years, I am shocked by the blindness of my fellow-motorists who wrote to me this week. Three correspondents remonstrate with me for assuming, as they imagine, that all road accidents are the personal responsibility of the motorist. On the contrary, I am only too well aware that I may myself have an accident at any time, and that the immediate cause of the accident may be the carelessness of a pedestrian or cyclist. It would not alter my argument if in every case of a road accident

the motorist had been careful and the victim negligent. One indignant correspondent charges me with class bias because I remarked that the class feeling that now arises in the case of many accidents here is absent in America where so many workers own cars! My point was quite simple. Motorists are not to blame for a large proportion of the accidents that happen. But the accidents happen because there are motorists on the road. From the pedestrian's point of view, the situation is very much as if a section of the community owned revolvers and were allowed to discharge them at birds or other targets as they went along the street. The number of people killed by this form of sport might in that case be similar to the number of fatal motor accidents, and it would often be possible for the man who fired the shot to prove conclusively that not he, but the passer-by who negligently got in the way of his well-aimed bullet, was responsible for a fatal accident. That's about how the situation looks in a village through which motorists drive at fifty miles an hour. It is the villagers' fault, no doubt, if they get in the way, but is it reasonable for people to drive at fifty miles an hour through a village street in which children play and where people from time immemorial have walked about on their lawful occasions? I can most simply answer my correspondents by saying that if I have an accident in which I killed somebody, I shall feel a most unpleasant degree of moral responsibility even if the accident is not technically my fault. I shall know that if I had been more attentive and more imaginative, the accident might have been avoided. The only perfect rule for the driver is to regard every other motorist as a homicidal lunatic and every pedestrian as a suicidal one.



26 FEBRUARY, 1949

THERE is little or no logic in the blood sports controversy. No one denies that destructive animals have to be killed, but neither can anyone seriously argue that the cheapest, most effective and kindest way of killing them is for packs of people to put on costly fancy dress and to chase them to their death with the help of the best-bred horses and hounds specially trained for the purpose. No, cant aside, hunting and coursing are maintained because they give pleasure to the people who take part in them. The pleasure, at least in the case of

fox-hunting, is of a special kind; it is a ritual, a "way of life". There are some hundreds of people to whom the idea of suppressing hunting rouses the same kind of emotion that would be evoked in others by a proposal compulsorily to shut all the churches. Knowing this, Mr. Seymour Cocks has left fox-hunting to a separate Bill and concentrated on forbidding such sports as the coursing of hares and the chasing of the carted deer. A majority of the Commons would probably like to vote for his Bill. After all, unless people have been brought up in that particular perversion, they prefer that hares should be shot for food rather than that they should be torn to pieces by dogs, and that stags should be expertly killed rather than they should be chased, terrified, into water and then dragged out by men in boats so that their throats can be cut. Nevertheless, I doubt if Mr. Cocks's Bill will pass. The electoral repercussions of interfering with coursing and stag-hunting, let alone fox-hunting, are apparently serious. Just as publicans are trying to persuade their customers that the Government intends to nationalize the pubs and prevent anybody from playing darts in them, so ignorant villagers are being induced to believe that they soon will be forbidden to go out after rabbits with a dog and a gun. The fear that such propaganda is making headway in the villages is sufficiently great to lead the Government to make strenuous efforts to prevent Labour Members from voting against blood sports.



14 MAY, 1949

POLITICS has raised its ugly head in our village. National newspapers solemnly announce that "Critic" is standing as a Labour candidate for the Parish Council. There are not many more than 300 people in the village, and the duties and powers of a Parish Councillor are not extensive. Periodically, five Very Important People, including the chief local farmer and landowner, probably somebody from the Manor and three others of unimpeachably correct status and opinions, select themselves for the Council and are accepted by a show of hands in the school-hall. For the first time, this year the selection is by ballot. Several village workers have decided that they want a change. They do not see why our village should not even appear in the schemes of sewage development. They do not see

why, when water and electricity pass through the main street of the village, it should be laid on in so few houses. They even talk about a club room and other amenities for the local youth. So they have challenged the five eminent citizens, braving a loud, shrill outcry at the wickedness of introducing party politics into our happy village life. Now it would, indeed, be absurd for the voting in such matters of village life to follow strictly the lines of the national party warfare. Oddly enough, however, this point had never arisen as long as no Socialist stood for the Council. Conservatism is not party politics; Labour is. For my part I have given my personal pledge that when a Council is elected consisting entirely of anti-Conservatives, no party politics should be allowed to enter again into the village life.



11 JUNE, 1949

I PROTEST that it's quite untrue that I am the original young man in the limerick who could not tell the difference between God save the Weasel and Pop goes the King. I always recognize the National Anthem, unless the band confuses me with a lot of unauthorized twiddly bits. But I admit that as a bird listener I am more enthusiastic than efficient. This year I obeyed the official instructions and went into the garden at dawn with a pencil and paper. The whole thing came off according to schedule. The first item was a solo, maintained with precision but without variety for more than a minute, by a cuckoo. I detest cuckoos. I do not go so far as one man who told me that he got up in the early hours to chase the cuckoos out of his garden, once even losing his bedroom slippers by throwing them at this mocker of married men who sat on an apple-tree branch protected by a bed of stinging-nettles. But I agree with him that cuckoos are the most persistent of all bores. After the cuckoo came that pause which I find the most wonderful moment of the bird chorus. You can hear them waking up, opening their eyes and trying out their voices under their breath as it were. The music was just tuning up like this when that habitual disturber of peace, the blackbird, went off like an alarm clock and shattered the stillness. Then everyone joined in. I ought to be able to tell you and the Bird Research Station at Glanton, Northumberland, what I heard, but, as I say, my ear is not good enough for that. I heard a willow-wren,

and the blackbird made up for his earlier attack of nerves by sitting on the roof of the shed and whistling and singing as if he'd burst with happiness. Soon there were twenty different birds singing together. I listened and despaired of sorting out the robin from the wren and the thrushes from the blackbirds and the warblers from each other. Despairing of sorting them out, I went back to bed. My gratitude to the Bird Research Station for getting me out of bed to hear the orchestra is not any the less because I cannot supply them with scientific material.



8 MARCH, 1952

ONE of the peculiar advantages of the British climate is that we have so many dramatic announcements of spring. In Moscow, for instance, there is the miraculous day when the population collects on the banks of the Moskva to watch the ice cracking and breaking and jostling downstream. To compare small things with great, I watched this year on a brilliant sunny Sunday morning a gay scene at the Whitestone Pond in Hampstead where children, standing out in the water in wading-boots, were breaking off big lumps of ice and having fine fun sliding them under the frozen crust where it was still unbroken. The children in Moscow could not have enjoyed themselves more. And then in Britain we get occasional brilliant days when people nod to each other and say: "It feels like spring", always to be met with the sage nodding of the head and the warning "we may still have snow yet" or "don't forget we have not yet had our March east winds". This cautious ritual is repeated every year. But that does not make the slightest difference to my actual pleasure in picking in my garden last Sunday not only winter jasmine (still out), winter aconites (beginning to blow over), snowdrops (at their best), red japonica (bursting), Christmas roses (late), cherry pie, crocuses, catkins and finally splendid, fat budding palm.



26 APRIL, 1952

IN Monday's *Times* a charming letter appeared from Tom Driberg saying that he had heard the cuckoo, much too early, on the morning of April 16th. More to the point, my experience of this odd spring is the behaviour of the nightingales, which were singing, much too

late, on the same date. It quite upset my notion of nightingales to be kept awake by them in April. The first time that I remember hearing a regular chorus of nightingales was in France in the district of Etaples in the early summer of 1918, when I was working on an ambulance train. The next time was in 1930, on magical moonlit nights in Euboea. But in Greece nightingales had to compete with an almost deafening frogs' chorus. During the last twenty years I have only heard nightingales occasionally by going out on purpose to listen to them on some (very rare) hot June night. This year in Essex relay teams of them seem to be singing, with more passion and beauty than I've ever heard before, during most of the night in every spinney and hedgerow.



8 MAY, 1954

INSPIRED by the success of the Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Churchill, R.A., I have recently started to paint in oils. The result is immensely satisfying—to myself. My mind has never been so happily preoccupied. I cannot paint with reasonable efficiency an old brick wall or an old man's face, but I cannot pass one or the other without puzzling how I should do it, if I could. Even chess fascinates me less; politics are a bore. Bikini simply raises the question how one paints an atomic mushroom. I listen eagerly to a plenitude of advice. I ought to find a competent teacher; on no account should I spoil the freshness of my vision by taking lessons. I should sit by the side of an experienced painter and watch him paint; nothing could be worse than to learn short cuts by seeing how another painter does it. I should never draw first and then paint; I ought to draw only with the brush. I must sketch my whole design first and "fix" it before I apply the colours. I should not bother at all, but just go ahead and paint my fancy. I should begin with easy things; I should skip all preliminaries and plunge right into everything complicated and difficult that engages my attention. I should take advice from old and experienced friends; I should take no notice at all of what anybody says and just do what I damn well please. The only point on which I am sure is that my education was lamentably neglected. Why did I waste so many lack-lustre hours learning the grammar of dead languages, instead of being compelled to attend a life class?



11 SEPTEMBER, 1954

SITTING at my desk, with a piece of yellow (cadmium) blotting-paper in front of me, I am supposed to be thinking great thoughts, writing leading articles, correcting proofs, or otherwise helping to subvert the world. Actually, I am studying the way in which Van Gogh painted a cornfield in a reproduction on my walls. I realize there are differences between me and Van Gogh. He cut off one of his ears; I still have both mine. He was born in Holland; I was not. He had a brother who financed him; I have not. He was in an asylum at Arles; I am not. And another thing. He painted better than I do.



18 JUNE, 1955

I STARTED, last week, to discuss the oddities of memory; now new examples keep turning up. Not long ago, I thought I would like to see what had happened to the two houses in Hereford where I had lived in boyhood. I remember parts of them in the minutest detail. The first was much the better of the two; its garden once contained a huge, wild pear tree. The year that I was three, and had scarlet-fever, it produced its one and only crop of tiny pears which my mother cut up and stewed by the hundred, because she had to sit in the bedroom with me anyway. I also remember the fir tree, which was easy to climb, and the way the stairs went up from the hall. This last memory is particularly vivid, because, when I was six, I was standing at the bottom of the stairs when the "mother's help" dropped the basket with the new baby in it from the top to the bottom, and I watched my small sister roll out on the floor. The second house, of course, I remember in much more detail, and a horrid house it was. I visited them both to see what changes had occurred in a generation. In both cases friendly housewives opened the door, and, when I explained that I'd lived there forty or more years ago, they took me round as if this was a good enough excuse. In the second house I jumped, because in exactly the place where I stacked my bicycle at the top of the cellar stairs, her boy now had *his* bicycle parked. In the back garden, I remembered how my elder

sister and I used to get up very early, with two biscuits each, and she was good at running along the high brick wall along the bottom of the garden, and I was terrified to do more than walk. But on the swing she found it very difficult to jump off when it was going, while I could jump when it was quite high. And now, going back, I met a small girl playing in the same garden, and her mother was telling her she must be careful playing like that on the top of the wall. I asked her how she got on to it, and she showed me that, in place of the manure pile that we used to climb up by, there was now a plum tree that served the same purpose. Then we went over the house, and I compared the rooms as they are today with my memory of them.

I now come to the point of this story. I called at these houses with the idea of writing something about the way fashions change. After I had left, I found I could not remember what I had just seen. My memory of the past was so vivid that I could hardly remember a single change. Even now, when I shut my eyes I cannot see at all what I looked at the other day. Everything is still exactly as it was when I was a child—the wild pear tree, long since uprooted, is still there; so is the old carpet on the landing where I upset the scalding water on myself; I cannot see the garden without the swing or climb, in my mind, on to the wall except by the manure heap.



1 OCTOBER, 1955

FROM early childhood we grow up with a Platonic idea of English weather. "January brings the snow, makes feet and finger glow. February brings the rain, thaws . . ." April is enjoined to "laugh her girlish laughter, shed her girlish tears", and so on. Every now and again, when year by year our scepticism has been growing, there comes a season that confirms these seasonal myths. White Christmas? I am not sure that I remember one in England. A "real summer"? 1911 evokes memories of long days on the Wye, incredibly shallow, the boat always sticking on a rock so that a small boy had a good excuse for falling into the water to push it off again. 1921? Hot. My first visit to Germany; we walked day by day in a blaze of sunshine through the ripening cornfields of Bavaria. September 1939? Crowds of solemn children with gas-masks climb-

ing out of buses. 1940? The little boats and the army that escaped Hitler. And a few, very few, other seasonable summers. This year we have had the sort of summer that is laid up in heaven. No broken arc, but the perfect round. I shall remember it for early mornings on top of the Downs when I looked over a white rolling sea of cloud out of which, like great rocky islands, the twin Downs of Mount Caburn and Itford rise up, bleak and bold. And then, as I watch, a frieze of trees appears through the mist, just as a Japanese artist would silhouette them, grey, unsubstantial, paper thin. When the mist rises, Lewes Castle stands guarding its immemorial gap, and the water-meadows lie beneath with odd little stretches of river catching the light. Around us are sheep cropping the grass, and in the distance the sea and the sharp white cliff falling down to Seaford, with the Birling Gap a step ahead, and, beyond, the high Down above Beachy Head just coming into view.



29 OCTOBER, 1955

THE other day I had a beautiful vision. It came to me while I was being taken round Reed's paper mills at Aylesford in Kent—the largest and, I'm sure, the most efficient mixed paper mill in Europe. Has no detective-story writer ever conceived of this simple, foolproof, final and utterly satisfying means of journalistic vengeance? I watched the bundles of wood pulp being fed into the great vats where it is churned into porridge. I saw it flowing with the violence of Niagara down a chute and emerging, after a vast tumble in the rollers, solid and purged of impurities, respectable newsprint fit to be made into *The New Statesman* and other less august journals. My mind, always evasive about technicalities, wandered off on a personal chase. Suppose I came here one day with old X, who has so often treated me with inadequate respect in his contemptible rag.... Courteous, old comrades in arms, we should look down into one of the vats; a nonchalant push and his cries are drowned in a whirl of machinery; in the centre of the vat he is seized with the rest of the pulp by the "agitator"—how agreeably ironic a fate for him, the grim old reactionary!—and after a few turbulent moments he is mingled with the pulp, crushed flat and swept with inconceivable velocity down a cataract with the water pouring out of him all the

way. Then the great rollers catch him, play with him, tumble and somersault him, smooth him and refine him and squeeze him dry as *The Times*. If he snaps in the process—and who could blame him?—a score of swift and skilful hands are there to blow the fluttering bits of him off the rollers with hose-pipes; the machinery does not stop even for a second. In the bat of an eyelid the breakage is repaired and he is smoothly wound off on to a huge spindle, which a giant crane deposits on a neat pile ready for next week's issue. What if the *N.S. & N.* is a bit more pink than usual that week? No one will notice. What they will all applaud is the admirable generosity, the delicate affection and moving sincerity of the obituary that I shall, quite literally, write upon him.

MR. PARK

14 AUGUST, 1937

"THERE'S the enemy again," said Mr. Park, the gardener, who was showing me how to make a concrete dam with a sluice in it across the end of the pool. Sure enough, there, once again, in spite of what I'd said about wire to Mr. Tomkins (who keeps fowls as well as selling beer in the pub), was a silly white hen scratching in what I hope next year with be a flower garden. "If you've told Tomkins about the hens a-coming in and you've given him full warning," said Mr. Park, "and then they still keep a-coming, you've got the right to shoot them on your land. Mind, you've not got the right to pick them up and eat them afterwards. You've no claim to his fowl, but you have the right to kill it; that I do know, because of what Board, the builder, told me. He let his pig go into Sullivan's flower nursery and Sullivan told him about it, but Board didn't take him serious and next day Sullivan comes and tells him that he's shot his pig. And he had. The pig was worth £3 10s. to Board and he wouldn't believe it when the lawyer he went to see said he had no remedy at law, so he went to three lawyers and they all said the same, that as long as Sullivan had just shot the pig and not moved it, Board could do nothing about it." Pondering this story and asking myself how long the pig had lain where it was shot and who had moved it in the end, I called on Tomkins and hinted that his white hen was in danger. "No," he said, "you daren't touch my hen. That will cost you 5s. a time if you do, after I've fenced. I know the law about that because

when Ditch, the farmer, let his cow stray into my garden I told him about it and he put some wire across, but that didn't stop it. So I told him again and he said: 'Well, Tomkins, I've done my fence: now it's your turn; it's the law, that you've got to fence your side now. And I had to.' " Clearly, I'll have to find a lawyer of my own. So I just had a pint and didn't tell Tomkins that I am plucking up courage to slaughter his white fowl next time—even if it costs me 5s.

4 SEPTEMBER, 1937

MR. PARK was standing under a tree loaded with codlings. The ground was strewn with them; they are a soft apple and the birds like them. Mr. Park remarked that if he had his way he'd have all the birds "done away with". "People like Lady Astor, who get Acts of Parliament through about things like that, ought not to be allowed to have anything to do with government at all." I ventured a remark about slugs, snails and caterpillars eating everything if there were no birds. Yes. He approved of wrens—wonderful to watch them at work on the green-fly—and goldfinches and linnets and some of the other small song birds. But he'd put poison down for the sparrows, and as for the blackbird, "that's a bird that's better dead". The bullfinch was just as bad, and the jackdaws and such like were no good to anyone, and people like Lady W. up at the big house ought to be made to pay £5 a year to everyone with a garden round about to make up for not keeping the jackdaws down. "They are just vermin, and the reason why there are so many more birds now is that the gamekeepers used to keep them down. Today the sort of bird that does get killed off is the wrong sort. Nine times out of ten, if you watch a sparrowhawk, it's a mouse, a mole or something of that he has in his claws, and that's all to the good, but the sparrowhawk gets shot. No, there ought not to be any laws protecting birds—he'd never be able to grow anything if he didn't kill the sparrows . . ." And if I didn't agree that was because I didn't have to make my living off the land.

25 SEPTEMBER, 1937

I SAW the other day in the papers that Birmingham was having a plague of wasps that were fighting the Birmingham bees. Well, they

need not swank. We've got plenty of wasps down our way, too. You can kill them in scores just by walking under the apple-tree and stamping on the windfalls. There are at least three in every ripe apple. You can drown them in dozens in jam-jars. Or, of course, you can scream and wave your hands at them until you get stung. Mr. Park, self-appointed wasp slayer of the neighbourhood (he keeps bees), got rid of twenty-seven nests last year and something over thirty nests this year. This year's record number of wasps he puts down to the lack of frost last winter. All the nasty things survived—including, it seems, hornets. I don't remember seeing a hornet since I was a child. But there it was on the window-pane, enormous, really intimidating, two inches long I thought it, while I watched hesitating and wondering whether to risk a flip of my finger, which is my usual way of killing wasps. Mr. Park saw me through the window and was in like a flash. He caught it between his thumb and finger and threw its corpse out of the window. Those things killed a cow the other day, he said, returning to his job of filling up rat-holes. Every now and again one realizes why life was not dull even before Hitler and Mussolini.



20 NOVEMBER, 1937

THE French marigolds which have been a steady blaze of copper and yellow for more than six months have at length given in to last week's frost, and so have the salvia and the yellow antirrhinums and the bit of sweet rocket which came out in October and the anchusa which survived into November—they've all decided to give up the struggle at last. But the hollyhocks and red-hot pokers are still going strong and the kingcup plants which I dug up from a wild marsh and planted in my stream in October have actually taken the opportunity of bursting into flower. I asked Mr. Park if he'd ever seen a later season. He is a cautious man and not given to superlatives. No, he said, he didn't recall one, not down in Essex. When I added that my colleague Dives, who has the eccentric habit of having his week-end cottage in Scotland, reported that the rose campions there were in full flower, that there were fat green buds on the ash-trees and that a mixed party making a bonfire of dead leaves were distracted from their work by the amorous activities of robins who appeared to think

that the mating season had arrived, Mr. Park paid me the most enthusiastic compliment he ever offers me: "I don't disbelieve you at all, sir," he said and returned to the job of manuring the rose-bed.

12 MARCH, 1938

"WE'LL have to pay for this later on," they say as they come out of the sunshine into the village pub for a glass of beer at dinner-time. Mr. Park, the gardener, is equally gloomy. "Do you know the old saying?" he asks me. "You are sure to get as many frosts in May as you get in March, except for those you've had in April." Sorting this out I find that he means that (*a*) in spite of the hot sunshine each day so far in March (it is only in London that we've had the fogs) we have also had sharp frosts at night, and (*b*) according to the saying ("that's a rule that almost always works out right," says Mr. Park), the total number of frosts in April and May are together always the same as those in March. Therefore, (*c*) if this weather continues, "we are asking for trouble". The sun will bring the fruit blossom fast and there will be a lot of late frosts to nip it off. Here finally is a rational explanation of the belief that we shall have to pay later on for enjoying the sunshine now. But I am sure that the real explanation has nothing rational about it; it's a guilty feeling that it's "unseasonable" to feel so comfortable in March: we ought to be buttoning up our coats against a bitter east wind. In any case, pleasure, according to the Puritan tradition, is always dangerous, a trap for the unwary to be atoned for later with tears and stripes. Nevertheless I found it very jolly to sit in the sunshine with the sun warm in my face listening to the astonishing "honk, honk" of the wild geese as they fly overhead to the marsh close by with outstretched necks and flat, fast-beating wings.

17 JUNE, 1939

MR. PARK is a great bee-keeper. He is sentimental about bees and quite impervious to their stings. Yesterday he had a small cut in his eyelid; he explained that he had just dug a bee-sting out of the side of his eye with his knife and that his arms were still full of them.

Two swarms had tried to occupy the same territory in a neighbouring farm-house; he had gone to collect the swarms and found them fighting fiercely. They had taken a lot of getting because they were in a narrow slit behind a pipe. But they were fighting all over the roof, "wrestling and buzzing and falling off the roof on to the ground in scores. You could have swept up a peck of dead bees off the ground underneath." Then he went on to repeat the old superstition about "telling the bees". Bees, he said, were remarkably sensitive to the death of the man who owned them. If the owner died you had to take the key of his house and tap on each hive and say "So-and-so is dead". If you failed to do this all the bees would disappear in a few days. They would die or go away and "no one would see them go". When you took the key and told the bees their owner was dead, the queen would come out and hover round outside for a minute as if she were going off and then she would go back. If you said nothing you would lose all your bees, as had happened to a friend of his who had forgotten to tell the bees when the master died. I pressed him for evidence. "It's been proved times out of number," he said. And what happened if you told the bees falsely when no one was dead? Were the bees deceived? Did the queen come out and hover round just the same? "No," he said, "you could not deceive them like that." He had not tried himself, but he knew a man who had. Anyway, there was no doubt about it; you must tell the bees; it had been proved times out of number. I believe a considerable ritual about "telling the bees" exists in various parts of the country. It was new to me at first hand, described with simple faith only an hour from London.

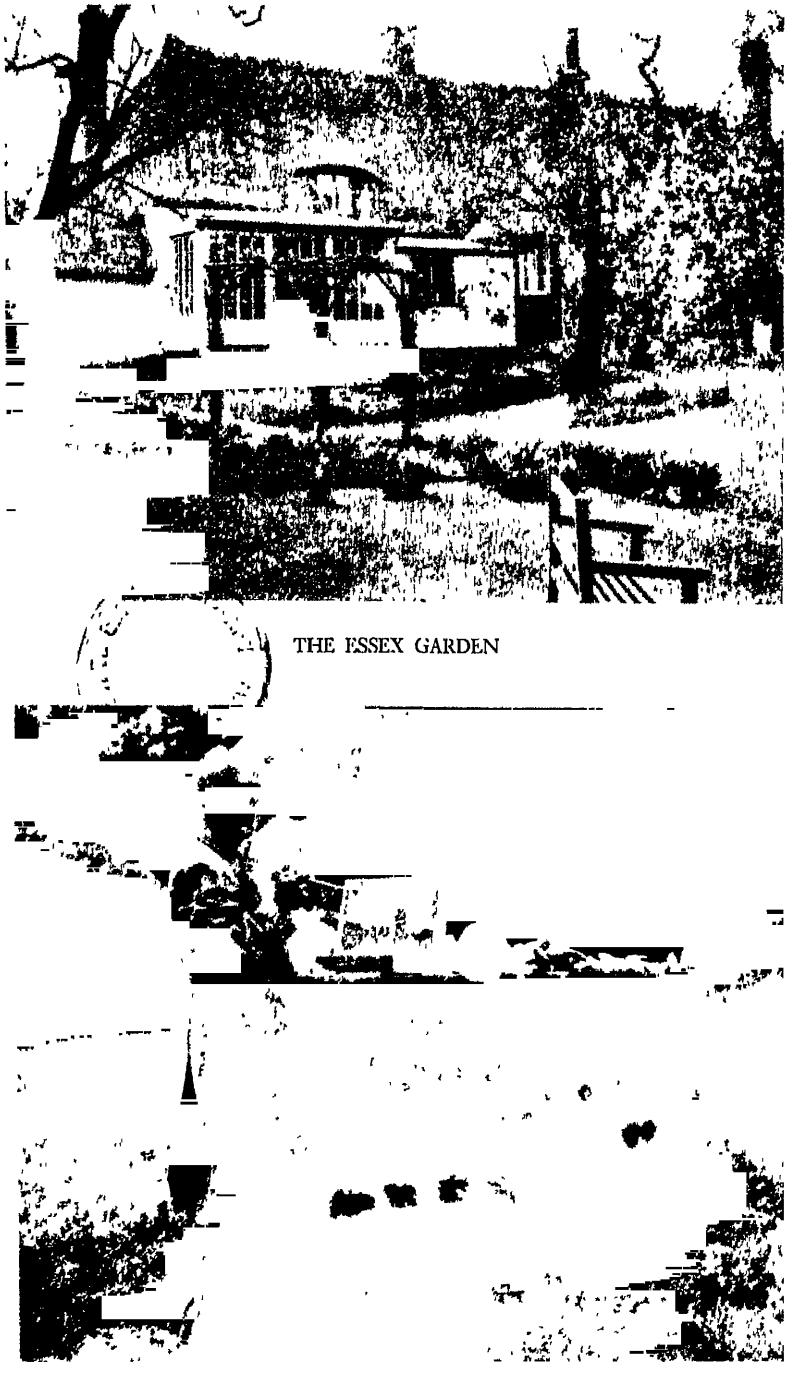


24 JUNE, 1939

MR. PARK'S black spaniel recently had two fine puppies. One went away and died of distemper. The second stayed with Mr. Park and flourishes. "Oughtn't you to have him inoculated?" we asked. "There are better things against distemper than any inoculation," said Mr. Park. "If you can train a puppy to take a teaspoonful of tea every day he won't ever get distemper. It's the tannic acid that does it. It's a bit of a job to get them to take tea, but once you've got them used to it, then you need not worry about distemper."



MR. PARK



THE ESSEX GARDEN

22 JUNE, 1940

IT is not the fault of Mr. Park, the gardener, that I have written so little of him recently. He has come out strong in the crisis and has views about what should be done to the Germans that are quite unprintable. A strong, wiry man, badly wounded in the last war, he at once became prominent in the L.D.V. On Sunday I found him very annoyed. The officer who has been in charge of the L.D.V., a popular and efficient man who lives in our village, is ill. His place has been taken by another colonel in a neighbouring town. As the result, three of the L.D.V. of Little Fishpond had been told to patrol Great Fishpond which is a mile and a half away. Mr. Park said this was all wrong and others agreed with him. Their job was to look after Little Fishpond. The L.D.V. would resign if this sort of thing went on. But we had other things to talk about. A swarm of bees was passing overhead. Mr. Park hurried off to beat a tin-can, with the astonishing result that the bees came straight down to swarm on the hedges near by. The methods of bee-keeping in Essex in 1940 have not changed since Virgil's *Georgics*. It was an enormous swarm which filled a large wooden box and it was fun to watch the bees, guided by a little smoke, walk up the steep board into the hive. Why, I asked Mr. Park, do they come down when you beat a can? For once Mr. Park had no theory. I have since bothered more learned folk about this strange piece of rural lore. There is a theory about vibrations; perhaps the bees think a thunderstorm is coming. Or perhaps not. Very mysterious I call it.

17 AUGUST, 1940

I HEARD a loud voice in the village street. It was the first time I had ever heard a loud voice in the village. There are only a dozen houses and a pub. The owner of the voice was an earnest little man with sandy hair and spectacles. He was asking us all with great energy what would happen to us if we neglected the chance of salvation which Jesus offered to us. Perhaps because there was no very obvious answer, no one came within more than ten yards of him. The soldiers were sitting chatting on the bench outside the pub. It

was a lovely evening, mild and comforting, like the beer. "He comes like that once every year," said Mr. Park. "I never saw anyone listen to him." Feeling sorry for him but unable to interrupt the flow of his exhortation to tell him so, I went in for half a pint. There was the usual shove ha'penny and darts and also an amusement that was new to me. A soldier was standing with outstretched arm on which a man was tattooing a coat of arms with an electric machine. He had both arms done with what appeared to be a regimental crest. It was in two colours, red and blue. The operation looked painful. Apparently you pay 1s. for a small tattoo and you can get one as big as your chest or back, if disfigurement for life is really worth 10s. to you. Judging from the interest of the audience tattooing is more popular than salvation in our village.

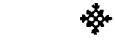
1 MARCH, 1941

MR. PARK was talking to me about fruit trees. The people who tell you that it is still safe to plant them in March are prompted, in his view, either by ignorance or by a desire to sell off surplus stock. He explained that the sap is rising by March; instead of having the winter to settle down into the earth as they have if you plant them in November, they only just begin to get established when the summer comes, and if the season is dry "you mostly lose them all". This seemed good sense. Then he said: "Why, you can tell when the sap's rising. Did you see the mist that came up this morning?" I had indeed. The bright sunshine had suddenly disappeared; a spring haze came over everything. "That," said Mr. Park, "is the sap rising. That's what they all say round here, and I've seen it's true." I recounted this piece of local lore to Mrs. X, my neighbour. "Well," she said, "I went into our shed a few days ago and as I got to the door the gardener called out: 'Don't come in, I'm in trouble.' But it was only his shoe and sock he had off. He was squashing a slug on his toe. He declared that it was a sovereign remedy for corns."

21 MARCH, 1942

GENERALLY speaking, I hate all those who shoot birds, and the man who shoots a lonely pigeon, usually a homing pigeon, would get short

shrift from me. But as I look at the ruined rows of cabbages, gaunt stalks with spidery fragments left where there should have been good succulent green stuff, I find a growing partiality for wild pigeon pie. For me there can never be too many birds. But starlings and sparrows are quite plentiful enough, and as for the huge flocks of fat pigeons that descend on my garden and which ate it bare during the frost, I don't mind if they get shot by the hundred. I recall a saying of the French peasants before the Revolution; they had two grievances, priests and pigeons, they said: the one devoured them in the seed and the other in the grain. I began to express my feelings about pigeons to Mr. Park. I should have been wiser silent. He has all the immemorial hatred for birds that characterizes the smallholder on the Continent. Robins and wrens are the exception; but he has seen tits, he declares, sitting on a hive, tapping it with their beaks and snatching the bees as they come out. Nor can I persuade him that most birds do more good than harm. I told him of some French farmers who systematically cleared an area of birds and whose land was consequently eaten up with insects and utterly barren. Finally he declared that the trouble was all these trees about! He could see the pigeons and other birds sitting in their cover ready to swoop down the moment his back was turned. He would cut down all the trees . . . I began a lecture on the balance of nature, but I might have saved my breath. In a society as unnatural as this how is one to sustain that still sound argument? And then Mr. Park knows quite well that, whatever arguments I use, my real reason is just that I am fond of trees and even of bullfinches.



22 SEPTEMBER, 1944

MR. PARK is very indignant. For many years he has destroyed as many wasps' nests as he could trace. His only reward has been a word of gratitude and congratulation from local gardeners and farmers when he annually informs them, some time in September, that his bag this year is one hundred and something. This year the wasps are particularly bad. But the local chemists could sell him nothing that was lethal to wasps. He must get a permit, they said, from the War Agricultural Committee. Grumbling at red tape, Mr.

Park called at the offices of the Committee, to be informed, he tells me, that they could not provide him with cyanide or any equivalent; they would, however, send a man to destroy nests at 3s. a time!

10 MARCH, 1945

"I CAN get some lime from the Gardening Association," I said hopefully. "No good—too late," said Mr. Park. "The autumn's the time for lime." "Bone meal?" I inquired modestly. "Yes," said Mr. Park, "that won't do any harm at all." Greatly encouraged, I ventured to mention fertilizer. If I had put the garden fork into Mr. Park the effect could not have been more startling. "That stuff!" he said, "if you bring it in the garden I'll throw it out. Poisoning the earth, that's all it is." "But," I said, "if I can't get any other manure, Mr. Park, wouldn't it be better than nothing? After all, it's my garden, if I do want to try some." "Very well," said Mr. Park, "then you can look after your garden yourself." I thought it tactful to switch the conversation and to get other opinions of the Ministry's fertilizer in the pub. At first everyone was silent; then somebody said, "I'd rather have what my hens leave behind." "Yes," I said, "so would I. Will you let me have some?" This seemed to everyone a good joke. There was universal agreement that it had to be animal manure, with fertilizer scarcely, if at all, in the running. However, I got a bag of it and hid it where I hope Mr. Park won't find it. I plan some fine night surreptitiously to dig in a little in some part of the garden and find out whether fertilized cabbages do better than the others. But I doubt if I shall have the courage, for Mr. Park would almost certainly find out.

3 AUGUST, 1946

MAN and boy, no one in our East Anglian village has ever seen such a storm, though Mr. Park recalled one similar occasion of darkness at noon (but not so bad) when he was at school. The ground, they say, was white with hailstones the size of ha'pennies. "As if," said one mild-and-bitter, "someone was breaking up sheets of glass and throwing the bits at you." The water had poured off the road down into the houses; my own sodden carpets were drying in the garden all day on Sunday. The hail made holes in the cabbages as if cater-

pillars had had a field day. Yes, the damage to crops was bad; someone produced some specimen ears of wheat torn to shreds, with most of the grain threshed on to the ground. No one said anything about bread rationing, but in a few weeks' time there will be a new whispering campaign about Mr. Strachey's remarkable foresight. No doubt he arranged the sunspots, which I am told are the real explanation of this summer's tempests.

8 NOVEMBER, 1947

A CORRESPONDENT wrote to *The Times* last week to say that his may-trees were in flower on October 20th. The nearest thing I have seen to that are sprays of autumn apple blossom. But on Sunday, November 2nd, as I walked in the garden with Mr. Park, the holly-hocks and honeysuckle and japonica and clematis were all still in flower. The village, including Mr. Park, is persuaded that atom bombs have permanently upset the weather. Mr. Park was in excellent form on many subjects. He said that people stayed at home on Sunday nowadays because they had been "brought up to church and not Catholic". If the clergy went Catholic they could have the churches to themselves. He said that the Government ought to save fuel by forbidding all electric light bulbs of more than 25 watts. He has always refused to have electric light himself; the best light is that of a paraffin lamp. More than half the people who have to wear spectacles when they are young, said Mr. Park, ruin their eyes by electric light. I asked him if this regulation would not be a little difficult to enforce; he does not like bureaucrats or inspectors or filling up forms, and yet he would see to it that nobody had electric bulbs of more than 25 watts. When I pick up the *Daily* —— I find exactly the same confusion. The Government is to do this or that, and yet we are to have no bureaucrats. The confusion in Mr. Park's mind is the same as in Lord ——'s.

3 APRIL, 1948

THERE'S this to be said for lumbago—you're not the only one that's had it. Edging along like an aged and decrepit crab, you excite as much pity as ridicule. "Hope you've not got it as bad as I did," they say. "Why, I couldn't stir a step, not to get my foot on the ground

I couldn't . . ." Mr. Park, as usual, has his own remedy to offer. "Oil of juniper's the best thing," he tells me. "Six drops on a lump of sugar—if the Government will give you a lump. Lumbago is most always kidneys and there's nothing like oil of juniper for kidneys." The garage man recommended salts, but held, all in all, that sciatica was worse. According to the doctor, it's all your own fault, because if you touch your toes and rub the small of your back every morning you never get it. But the most illuminating of commentators was a friend who worked himself up in the ranks in the 1914 war and returned to the Army as an officer in 1939. "I've had a lot of it in my time," he said. "If you're a private they call it 'pain in the back'. When you're an N.C.O. you have lumbago. In civvies you suffer from fibrositis. But an officer goes down with myalgia." Clearly a good democratic malady, if that's any comfort.



19 JUNE, 1948

VILLAGE talk this week naturally turned on the death of a much beloved local wit, who was run over by a car a week or two ago in a country lane. He was an elderly labourer, reputed to be a comprehensive authority on the Law; he always sat in the same corner of the pub, slyly inserting dry and effective cracks into the stream of gossip. We believed he was going to get better; at any rate he was asking for beer in the hospital a few days after his accident. Some people in the village are very angry; Mr. Park declares that no motorist, in a built-up area or any other, ought to be allowed to go at more than twenty miles an hour. He would have all cars fixed that way. He adds that any motorist who kills anyone ought to be permanently branded on the forehead with the Mark of Cain. I am not surprised at the anger, even when it takes this exaggerated form. My surprise is that the non-motoring class tolerates a situation in which 7,000 people are killed annually by motorists, a few of whom, judging by the wireless, do not even stop to pick up the bodies of their victims. In America, where soldiers killed in battle in the war numbered only three times as many as road deaths in the same period, this passive acceptance of slaughter is more intelligible, because there are so many workers who also own cars. We have to admit that one of the least understood mysteries of sociology is just what people will put up with.



30 OCTOBER, 1948

A WISE woman I met the other day told me that she always arranges her holiday for October because it is the one month when you can rely on sunshine in this country. She has certainly done well this year. In my cottage garden last week-end I counted over thirty kinds of flowers that were still blooming or which had begun to bloom a second time in late October. Clematis and honeysuckle are again in flower; next year's primula and winter jasmine have kept a date with such survivors from last summer as sweet rocket, hollyhock and Old Betsy. Aubrietia and even dianthus and wallflower and snapdragon still flower along with the autumn Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums. The roses, of course, have all begun again. Mr. Park, however, took a poor view of the warm sunshine. He said, with positive indignation, that the frost had not been enough to hurt anything yet. "I'd have rather had this weather in the summer." "Oh, yes," I said, "so would I. But it's nice to have it now." "No," said Mr. Park, with emphasis, "it's time to begin winter now."



12 MARCH, 1949

I HAD agreed that the little elm had better come down. I wouldn't go so far as Mr. Park, who holds that all elms should come down, as being "neither use nor ornament". It would be many years before that tree would begin to show signs of the disease that Mr. Park points out in the splendid old elm that delights my eye on the far side of the orchard. "Dangerous," he says, "all of them; if I had my way everyone who lets an elm tree grow should be prosecuted. People are killed by them every year. Neither use nor ornament." But that wasn't the charge that led me to condemn the small elm. Mr. Park had a more effective argument, powerful even with me, much as I hate any tree to be cut down. The tree stood close to the vegetable garden. Mr. Park demonstrated that the roots were all mixed up with the celery bed; that they were entangled in the roots of the potatoes. With great reluctance I agreed that the small elm should come down. After all, there are lots of other trees in the

orchard. So on Sunday morning, when I saw that the world was white except where yellow crocuses pushed up through the snow, I said to myself: "There's an hour's work to keep you warm, my lad", and I seized the axe and saw and went out to cut down that elm. But Mr. Park had been before me. The stump was wonderfully neat, close to the ground and quite flat. The trunk had been split into convenient lengths, ready to cut for next winter's firewood. "Oh, Mr. Park," I said when he arrived for his weekly chat, "I see the elm's gone. I meant to cut that down myself." Mr. Park looked at me with great satisfaction. "And a nice mess you'd have made of it," he said.



28 MAY, 1949

THEY say the climate's improving. The ice-cap is retreating fast. In Iceland they are turning up ground that has been frozen stiff since the sixth century and finding ploughshares and other proofs of ancient cultivation. This, they say, explains why we have a gorgeous spring—as well, no doubt, why we had the worst winter on record two years ago and the mildest I can remember last year. Anyway it's grand now, and even Mr. Park had to admit that we've had a nice drop of rain and that if all goes well the prospects are good for the fruit. But he is a cautious man, Mr. Park, at least in speaking words of good omen; he is much more afraid of the punishment of *hubris* than of the fate of Cassandra. The blackcurrants, I must admit, were caught by the frost and look like making a poor crop. The greengages won't be too good either. But what about the apples and, Mr. Park, *what about the pears*? Did you ever see them more promising? "I've seen frost enough to kill anything as late as May 27th," says Mr. Park. Well, we ought to be safe in a few days' time then? Safe? No, indeed, says Mr. Park. Frost is only "one of the enemies". You can't tell about the apples until the end of June. We've not seen "the June fall" yet. There's a dozen pests that may destroy the crop. We don't even know how far the apples are pollenized and, if it keeps dry and there's a lot of wind . . . "Still, Mr. Park, you admit there's a lot to fall and leave plenty, don't you? And some of it is already swelling and must have been pollenized?" Yes, Mr. Park admits that. But, after all, he hastens to add, if we get a good crop then other people will get a good crop, too, and there will be a

glut; even Cox's Orange won't be fetching more than about "two-pence a pound". Even this fails to damp my optimism. After all, the ice-cap is a scientific fact, isn't it? But there is one thing in the garden that puzzles me. Why have no gladiolas come up in one particular patch where I know they were planted? Near by their green and brown spearheads are thrusting strongly. Why this bare patch? We decide to investigate. No sooner do we lift the top soil than we are covered with ants. A nest. The earth is alive with ants and their eggs. The remains of the gladiola bulbs are there, shells, the insides eaten away. "Regular pests they are," says Mr. Park. "They'd eat anything that gets into the nest. . . . We've a great many enemies," he adds, looking up through the apple trees into the cloudless blue sky.



18 JUNE, 1949

IN one of his lectures Professor Gilbert Murray tells a story of the aged and formidable Duke of Wellington astonishing the mess by declaring that in the Peninsular Wars his servant had opened a bottle of port and a rat had jumped out. The awe-struck silence was broken by an officer who thought valour more important than discretion. It must, he murmured, have been a very large bottle. "No," said the Duke, "it was a damned small bottle." "Oh," said the trembling officer, "then no doubt it was a very small rat." "It was a damned large rat," shouted the Duke, and there, as Professor Murray says, the matter has rested ever since. Mr. Park, the gardener, bears a strong family resemblance to the Duke of Wellington. He has often told me that the petals of white lupins always fall from the bottom as the blossoms open. He has, indeed, occasionally illustrated this unrecorded fact by pointing to a white lupin which is shedding its petals. I have never dared to risk any comparison with other coloured lupins at the same moment. But last week-end I called Mr. Park's attention to an unusually fine white lupin in which all the blossoms were perfect. Mr. Park said that the lupin was not white. "But, Mr. Park," I said, "why not?" "Because," he said, "the petals of white lupins always fall as they open."

27 AUGUST, 1949

THOUGH Mr. Park has destroyed nine wasps' nests close at hand, including one in the thatch right by my bedroom window, there are still enough wasps about to reduce many of my lovely Cox's Orange Pippins to nasty empty shells. In dry weather the blackbirds first peck a hole and then the wasps go in and finish the job. There seemed nothing to do about it because even in this very early season it's no use picking Cox's and Bramleys and James Greaves in August. There were clouds about but Mr. Park did not think much of the chances of rain. To hear him talking you would think Essex was the Gobi desert, protected by the Himalayas. "Even when it rains elsewhere," he said, "it generally by-passes this village. There are only three ways a thunderstorm ever gets here. It can come up the Ongar valley . . ." and he outlined two other alternative routes by which a storm could make its way through the mountain fastnesses of Essex. And then seeing perhaps a quizzical look in my eye he said: "Yes, these are only the three ways. That's well-known fact." I had to leave it at that.

11 MARCH, 1950

MR. PARK thought the result of the elections was better than nothing. "If we had had any more of this nationalization we should all have been so tied up that we could not have got anything," he said. . . . "Yes, a nice drop of rain in February, but the sub-soil was not soaked—not what you would call soaked, even now." He said that was how it would be when things got so dry last year, but "they never took such things as that into their calculations". I forebore to ask who "they" were and remarked on the heat of the March sunshine. "Well," said Mr. Park, "it's seasonal, properly speaking." Not, I suggested, in my experience. "Yes," he said, "when I was a boy we always had it regular as clockwork. The weather would break up near the end of February and we had three weeks, mostly sunshine. Then it would change suddenly, and blow hard and sudden from the north-east. It was called the blackthorn winter. You would get a couple of inches of snow in an afternoon. That

would last until about March 28th and the sun would come out and the snow would all be gone. That happened regular as clockwork." I never argue with Mr. Park.



8 JULY, 1950

"I NEVER saw the roses cleaner. Not a fly or spot." That was June. But with July the green-fly have arrived and the war is on. Mr. Park's remedy is soft soap, if obtainable. I told him that it had been in short supply ever since the General Election. "Well, then, yellow soap with a spoonful of paraffin will do," he said. "But" (very severely) "don't go and burn the roses as you did last year by putting too much paraffin." Actually Mr. Park's remedy for all such evils is what I call his rule of thumb.

Patiently and often he goes over the buds and the leaves of each rose with his finger and thumb and kills any green-fly or other insects when they are so tiny as to be nearly invisible. A scientific neighbour, however, tells me the more modern and even more effective remedy is a new insecticide called hexaethyl tetraphosphate, which is known to the trade as H.E.T.P. This kills practically all kinds of green-fly and black-fly and does not stain open flower blooms. Strangely, though both the diluted mixture and the fumes are very poisonous, H.E.T.P. does not kill ladybirds. This must rejoice every child-like heart, but most particularly it should please a well-known chrysanthemum grower I have been hearing about. He has never spent 6d. on insecticide, but he keeps his plants "clean as a whistle" by putting a couple of ladybirds—or their larvae which he calls crocodiles—on each plant. Apparently, he keeps up his supply of ladybirds by collecting them, or their larvae, from nearby woods, and from the thistles growing in ditches. Although earthworms are sold by the thousand in America, I have not yet heard of ladybirds being marketed here.



26 AUGUST, 1950

MR. PARK does not much hold with science. Having read what the experts say you can do with hormone-selective weed-killers, I told him the other day that I would get rid of all the convolvulus in my

garden within two years. I have a large, pretty hedge of it and it spreads into the beds and goes down, Mr. Park tell me, ten, twenty and more feet into the ground. So when I said I'd get rid of it, he looked at me old-fashioned, as they say. "You won't get rid of it in two years," he said, "nor in twenty-two either." Faced with this challenge, I've watered the foliage with the stuff and the convolvulus looks pretty dead—above the ground—after only a few days. Whether the roots have really burst themselves, as the books say they will, we shan't know till next summer. I'm also trying a cunning dodge in the beds by tying together bunches of convolvulus stems and dropping the ends into jam-jars full of a hormone solution. I'll be as pleased as a successful Channel swimmer if Mr. Park has to admit that the scientists are right. On one matter I can certainly convince him; the plantains which have been watered with the selective killer are already turning up their toes in the grass. There is an even more remarkable technique by which you can kill everything in a wheat-field except wheat. Mr. Louis Johnson may have had some such invention in mind when he remarked, I am told, the other day that he intended with the help of atom bombs to get rid of every Communist in the world. Anti-Communist hormones have not, as far as I know, yet been discovered, and Mr. Johnson must not forget that the Russians may get in first with a weed-killer that only attacks capitalists.



30 SEPTEMBER, 1950

THE morning of Saturday, 16th, was perfection. A day of gold and blue, as warm and fresh as only a September day can be. "It will be blowing up for rain," said Mr. Park. "Yes," I said, shaking my head dolefully, "it is too bright to last, and the B.B.C. says that dirty weather will spread to all parts of the country." It was disappointing, we agreed; we had promised to meet some friends for a jaunt to the Constable country. As the sun persisted, we said: "Well, we might get there before the rain, anyway. Let's chance it." We got to the village of Dedham, one of the loveliest in East Anglia, just as the shops were being shut for the lunch hour. The church and the village street were bathed in sunlight. "We're lucky," we said. "It has taken a bit longer for the rain to come than the B.B.C. reckoned,"

and we went off to Flatford Mill and ate lunch by the side of the water with mackintoshes handy. The sun poured down and we talked about bathing. We wandered round the Centre which is run by the Council for the Promotion of Field Studies; we talked to staff and students who were studying birds and salt- and freshwater life and painting and apparently having a very good time. It was still fine at Walberswick and Southwold, where we spent the night, and it hadn't rained when we got to Lavenham and Kersey next day. It was only when we were driving home in the afternoon that the dirty weather came. That night there was a gale, which brought to the ground the Cox's, the Blenheims and most of the pears. The B.B.C. was perfectly right; it had been blowing up for rain. But, as in most prophecy, the timing was wrong. If we'd followed the prophets we shouldn't have seen the trees and the church and the mill in the sunlight as Constable painted them.



14 APRIL, 1951

I ASKED Mr. Park why it was that the grass in nearby fields had almost disappeared under a rash of molehills. He said it was the same as everything else. People nowadays didn't take enough trouble to keep down the moles, and anyway, when the ground was so wet, moles were hard to catch because they went through the ground easily and dug under the traps. . . . Intelligent creatures with good noses, even if blind. More intelligent certainly than frogs. Mr. Park asked me if I had ever seen so many frogs squashed on the roads. "There's one spot where if I've seen one dead frog, I have seen two hundred," he said. With the road always under water how is the frog to know where he will get flattened by passing cars, and which pond is safe for frogs? Worse than Becher's Brook.

14 APRIL, 1951

FROM these biological topics we moved on naturally to the weather, agreeing that it was hard to lose both last year's summer and this year's spring. No, Mr. Park could remember nothing quite like it.

The tractors could not get on to the land, which at least showed the advantage of horses. No spring wheat was sown. It was too late for wheat now anyway, and in a fortnight's time it would be too late to sow even barley with any prospect of a proper crop. We were standing in the mud and the sun was shining. It was a bright interval, in which it was possible to notice that the primulas were doing well by the water, that the daffodils were undersized, as you would expect, and that the early plum buds were fat. "Of course," said Mr. Park, "the weather was funny earlier on, but it is seasonable now." "Seasonable?" I said. "Yes," said Mr. Park, pointing to the plum buds, "that's the cause of all this sleet and hail now. We always get this kind of weather when the blackthorn comes. We call it the blackthorn winter. When I was young, every year the wintry weather would begin to come to an end about the middle of February; you would be able to get on to the land. Towards the end of March you'd get gales and cold and flurries of snow. That is what this is. The blackthorn winter. It is seasonable enough." At that we both put up our coat collars and ran for shelter. It was thundering and the rain came down in icy sheets, every now and again turning to hail: cold bullets hit one behind the ear. "Let's talk again later," I said to Mr. Park, "on a less seasonable day. The blackthorn isn't out yet."



24 JANUARY, 1953

GARDENERS, I gather, are going to have a chance, this spring, of testing the practical value of Krilium, the announcement of which a year ago was a scientific sensation. Indeed one evening paper said that the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization could shut up shop, because here was the complete answer to the world's food problem. Now it is being put on the market with much less extravagant claims. It is "a soil-conditioner, which by its specific action on the clay constituents turns difficult problem soils of most types into loose, easily workable loam". In other words, it makes the ground "crumbly", gives easy passage to the roots, lets the air in, and prevents the soil from packing when it rains. It is not a fertilizer, but it gives the plants a better chance of using the nutrients available. In fact, it has the properties which Dr. J. H. Quastel and his colleagues working under the Agricultural Research Council found in

farmyard sewage many years ago. They extracted the active principle, but the natural product was prohibitively expensive and broke down quickly through the bacterial action in the soil. Then an American chemical firm discovered that an artificial resin, polyacrylic acid, had similar properties. Its British subsidiary, a scientifically minded friend tells me, has adopted another version—its chemical name is polysyllabic double Dutch to me—as being more suitable for British conditions. Anyway, it is a pink resin, and it is to be sold at 10s. 6d. per pound—enough to treat 14 buckets of soil or two rows of beans, 16 feet by 6 feet in area. Its merits or otherwise will no doubt be hotly debated by Mr. Park and his cronies, but it is a new departure in our thinking about soil. It takes Nature 300 to 1,000 years to make an inch of good top-soil. Chemicals cannot take Nature's place, but they may hasten the process and give Nature a bit of help.

7 MARCH, 1953

SATURDAY morning in Essex began in frozen fog. Mr. Park, who is usually tough about the weather, had to give over pruning because his hands were stiff with cold. The sun was beginning to come out when he came to see me; he said it would rain. "You saw that full moon last night," he said, "well, you know the old saying?

Saturday moon and a Saturday change,
Never comes out but that it rains."

"Does that apply to any change of the moon?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "that's the old saying, and it's generally always right, that if the moon changes on Saturday, that means rain." Thinking this over afterwards, I decided that the saying would often be right; this country is famous for its high proportion of wet Sundays. Oddly enough, on this one occasion Mr. Park was wrong. Saturday's change of moon was followed by a week-end that was cold, foggy, warm, sunny—and dry.

4 JULY, 1953

THE air round the tree was thick with swarming bees, it was one of those thick, floppy conifers that has at some period been lopped out

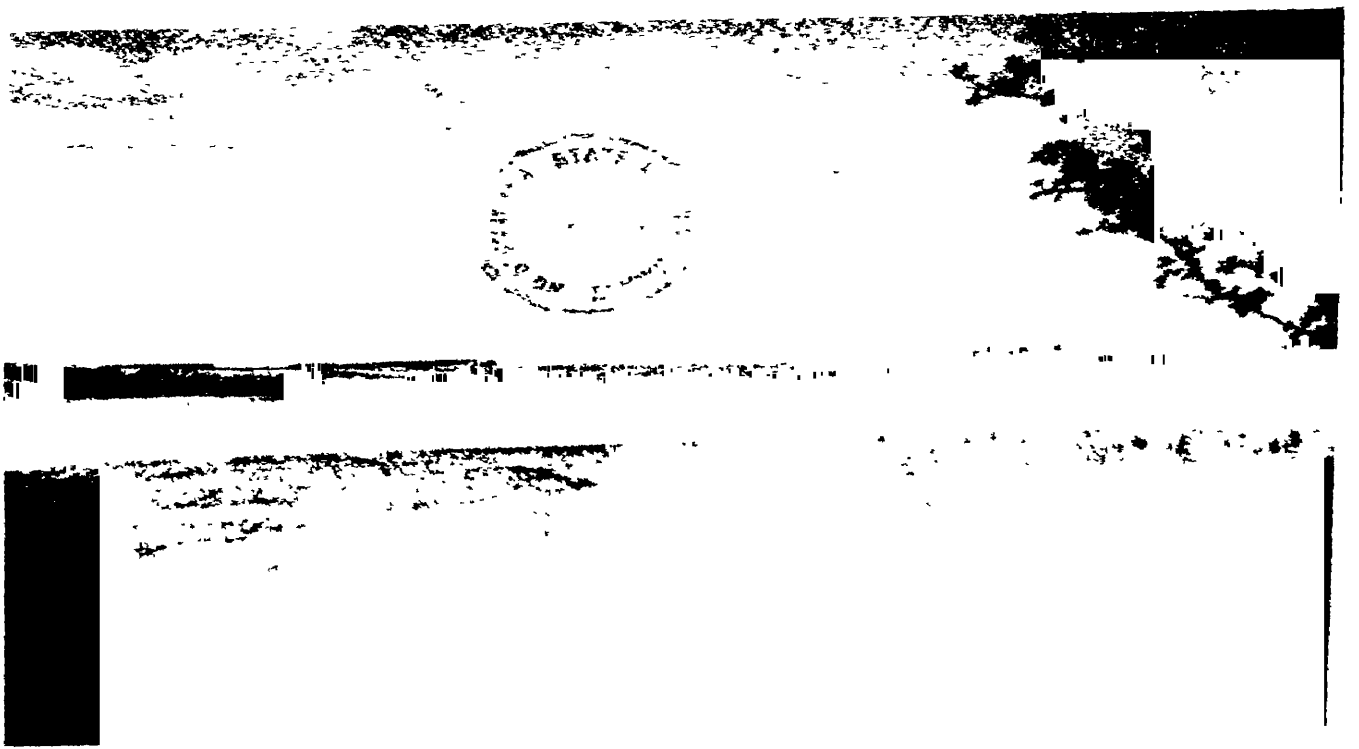
of shape. We were waiting at a respectful distance for the queen to make up her mind where to settle. They had come from one of Mr. Park's hives. He stood near by banging two bits of metal together. "Why?" I asked. He said, "The noise makes them stay at home"—an explanation I found far from complete. After a time the cloud of bees thinned out and the swarm could just be seen against the trunk of the tree between two fuzzy branches. Mr. Park dropped his gong and fetched first my fruit ladder and then a box. Wearing a cloth cap, but without veil or gloves, he climbed up into the tree, shook the angry swarm into the box, and came down and put it on to the ground. He went up again with a syringe of water. He used this to make rain over the bees that were still buzzing round. They did not like this and many of them joined the bees in the box. The job was only finished by a third climb up the tree to hang up a bunch of wet nettles. This, it seems, was too much for the bees, which all went off into the box. Mr. Park went in to his lunch. "Didn't you get stung at all?" I called out. "Not once," he replied over his shoulder. "I'd rather him than me!" said another spectator. "If I'd tried to do that I'd have been murdered with the stings; I come up in great lumps." "I always get stung when I'm handling bees," said another labourer near me. "But they never sting Bill Park."

7 NOVEMBER, 1953

THE morning mist was still hanging about over the garden when I had the strangest conversation I have ever had with Mr. Park. I said, looking up at a just-visible sun, that I was not sure whether the sun or cloud would win that day. Mr. Park said: "Well, it's Saturday, isn't it? You know the old saying—the sun always comes out on Saturday." "Now, really," I said, "why should you say that?" "Well," he said, rather hesitantly, "Saturday's the old-fashioned Sabbath, isn't it? Anyway, I have always noticed when it's foggy or raining cats and dogs on a Saturday, that the clouds will blow off just enough to let you see the sun some time in the day."

24 JULY, 1954

BAD weather has the effect of making Mr. Park repeat himself quite



THE VIEW FROM THE SUSSEX GARDEN



THE ROUNDABOUT

a lot. Unlike some of his neighbours he does not attribute the rain to atomic explosions in the Pacific. But he blames the scientists. Artificial manures are ruining the soil. The crops are being destroyed by the poisonous sprays that the farmers use. The same sprays account for the quick rusting of the wire that covers my thatch. "It's everywhere alike," he says after each accusation. "The scientists ought to leave off destroying everything with their inventions and do something useful. Look at this wind. It is mostly always due to allowing the windmills to decay. It stands to reason that the wind is now quite uncontrolled. What the scientists ought to be doing is to restart the windmills and build a great many more everywhere."



4 SEPTEMBER, 1954

No, said Mr. Park, there was nothing remarkable about picking peas in the garden in the last days of August; he had done it in October before now. Mr. Park, like the weather man, never allows you to claim any kind of record. We were standing in the first blazing sun of the year. He said: "The weather people on the B.B.C. would do better to stick to the old methods. It is the change of wind that beats them every time." "What are the old methods?" I asked. "Well, you can mostly tell whether it will rain or not by the wind on Quarter Day. It doesn't shift much in the three months afterwards." "Well," I said, "this beats St. Swithin! Do you mean that the wind always stays for the next three months where it happened to be on Lady Day, at Midsummer, Michaelmas, and Christmas?" "Yes," said Mr. Park, "from that direction or thereabouts."



11 SEPTEMBER, 1954

I WAS glad that the long-handled edging-shears I got at Mr. Park's request were only on appro. He would have nothing to do with them. The handles were riveted on; any self-respecting shears are made without rivets, the metal ends being beaten—"spragged" was the word he used—out flat so that they couldn't slip or break. "Garden ornaments", he contemptuously called the shears I offered

him; in his view they amount to "sabotage in the factory". He had known a pair that had broken right off . . . schoolboys' toys was all they were. I ventured to interrupt this tirade by pointing out that if the shears did break, which I thought might not happen for a year or two, it was I who would have to buy another pair. If I bought this pair, which was much less expensive than the brand he wanted and which was not in stock, the risk was mine. He would have none of it. A man, he said, must have a reliable tool. Yes, he could of course use the ones I showed him, but it was a waste of money, and he wouldn't do it. So that's that. The truth is that Mr. Park is a dictator. He has no doubt that he owns my garden and everything in the tool-shed.



16 APRIL, 1955

SOMEBODY asked me the other day what had become of Mr. Park. I have every reason to think that he is in good health, though nearly at retiring age. Unhappily, I no longer see him, because I have moved from a garden in Essex to a stretch of open downland in Sussex. I shall miss Mr. Park. We have worked together (or, rather, he has allowed me to do odd jobs) for about twenty years, and I have written about him for nearly as long. I believe that, to this day, he has not the slightest idea that anything he has ever said has appeared in print. Nor do I think that he would have been very interested if he had known. I do not expect to be provided with such excellent free copy in my new home. Here, instead of a garden, I have a view which, on days when it is not blotted out by sea-mist, embraces many miles of the South Coast. I also have, from my doorstep, walks in any direction over the downs, which may not, I am glad to say, be further built upon. I wonder how I have lived away from hills so many years.

Postcript

"In the old days," said Mr. Potwell, "before they started ploughing up the Downs, there really were blackberries. Big as strawberries they were." They are pretty big this autumn, and memorable—like the charms of goldfinches (32 strong on one occasion), and a badger seen (unhappily not by me) slinking past the gate at dusk, and the view over the valley in the early morning. Apparently there are

always anti-cyclones in the North Atlantic, but they only occasionally get glued over England. This is something science should attend to. If every year were like this, there would be no reason for inventing heaven, and no point in going for holidays except during the very short winters. (I would keep them for the sake of variety.) There should be occasional rain at night, though not too much, because it is fun watering the garden with a very simple new gadget, just a celluloid tube which automatically makes a fountain wherever you think wetness would be good. I'd make a few other changes; my marrows would grow up as melons. No one would have heard of nuclear energy. There would be a few, very distant, wars fought with blunderbusses; every now and then maidens would be carried off on the saddle-bows of picturesque ruffians. I wouldn't abolish such improprieties altogether because Critic must have something to write about in the Diary. Weekly papers, of course, must go on, though they would somehow cease to be weekly. And there would be no TV or Laotians or Senators, and Indians would have plenty to eat, and no one I like would ever grow older.



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